



# Workplace Equality<sup>and</sup> Respect

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

## Communications guide

**Our  
WATCH**  
End violence against  
Women And Their Children



This work was funded by the Victorian Government as part of the Workplace Equality and Respect Project led by Our Watch.

Our Watch 2017

Published by Our Watch

GPO Box 24229, Melbourne VIC 3001

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Acknowledgement of Country: Our Watch acknowledges the traditional owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Workplace Equality and Respect key tools

**Workplace Equality and Respect Standards**

**Workplace Equality and Respect Implementation Guide**

**Workplace Equality and Respect Self-Assessment Tool**

**Workplace Equality and Respect Key Progress Indicators**

**Workplace Equality and Respect Staff Survey**

**Practice guidance:** Engaging leaders

**Practice guidance:** Communications guide

**Practice guidance:** Dealing with backlash

**Practice guidance:** Equality and respect for all women - an intersectional approach

**Practice guidance:** Reducing risk in workplace initiatives to prevent violence against women

**Practice guidance:** Responding to disclosures

**Practice guidance:** Understanding your rights in the workplace and Victorian anti-discrimination law

**Practice guidance:** Workplace responses to staff who perpetrate violence

**Practice guidance:** Workplace gender equality and the law

**Practice guidance:** Workplace policies to support equality and respect

**Practice guidance:** Working in rural, regional and remote workplaces to prevent violence against women

**Practice guidance:** Workplace support for staff who experience family violence

## This guide aims to help you by providing:

- advice to support the development of a communications strategy
- some suggested key messages, communication channels and opportunities to align with international and national campaigns
- links to helpful resources.

We all know that culture and communication influence each other. Communication is a fundamental part of building any culture.

By engaging in a process to meet the *Workplace Equality and Respect Standards*<sup>1</sup>, your workplace has demonstrated its commitment to preventing violence against women. Part of this work includes creating a culture where employees feel confident to speak up if they see or hear about sexism, harassment, discrimination or violence.

Before you begin, it's important to familiarise yourself with three key considerations for engaging in this work.

- First you need to set up some support for those who have or are experiencing violence. A positive outcome of this work is that women who have experienced violence will have someone in their workplace to talk to and possibly ask for help. Your organisation should be prepared to handle these disclosures sensitively and effectively.

No one workplace alone can prevent violence against women, but all workplaces can contribute significantly by changing the structures, attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender inequality.

<sup>1</sup>As part of the *Workplace Equality and Respect* project a set of Standards has been developed which set out what needs to be done to truly embed equality and respect in any workplace. *The Workplace Equality and Respect Standards* are accompanied by a suite of tools and resources. These documents will be publicly available in 2018.

- Next is consistent messaging. One of the hardest messages to get across to new audiences is the link between gender inequality and violence against women. You can strengthen the link through repetition, consistency and using multiple formats.
- Finally, you will encounter resistance to change and you need to be prepared for this. Change takes time and some people will feel defensive and unsettled about it. De-personalise the issue by describing the changes as organisation-wide. Involve everyone from the start so that no one feels ambushed. Equip staff with answers for the inevitable questions.
  - For more information, see 'Risks and mitigating strategies' on page 12.
  - Also see *Practice guidance: Dealing with backlash*.

## 1. Communications aims and objectives

Every workplace is different but when it comes to preventing violence against women the goal of every communication strategy is the same:

### **Aim**

Everyone in the workplace understands what they can do to achieve gender equality and why they should do it.

### **Objectives**

There is a clear understanding of the:

- link between gender equality and violence against women
- workplace as a key setting where prevention of violence against women initiatives can be implemented.

## 2. Key messages

The following messages have been developed using the latest evidence and really show why workplaces are a key place to focus energy to prevent violence against women. It is important to use these messages in your internal communications, to give your staff a clear understanding of why you're all doing this work.

### **The workplace as a key setting to prevent violence against women**

These messages should be helpful if you need to raise awareness of the importance of workplaces taking action to prevent violence against women.

- Workplaces have a vital role to play in creating an Australia free of violence against women; an Australia where women are not only safe, but respected, valued and treated as equals in private and public life.
- Workplaces are a key setting for the prevention of violence against women not only because violence can occur within the workplace but also because workplaces can significantly influence our attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in both our personal and professional lives.
- We can reduce violence against women in Australia by increasing gender equality in every aspect of our lives. Organisational structures, norms and practices can either challenge or reinforce gender inequality.
- The power to prevent violence against women lies not in the efforts of a single workplace, but in the incremental changes all workplaces can make. The leadership of individual workplaces is vital to build momentum for this change.
- To reduce violence, workplace cultures need to reject sexism and discriminatory attitudes, confront organisational practices that devalue, exclude or marginalise women and support increasing the number of female leaders. Boards, CEOs and senior leadership must lead the work to achieve whole-of-organisation change.
- Women's experiences of violence, even if occurring in the home, impact on the workplace. By implementing programs and policies to prevent violence against women, workplaces stand to benefit through increased productivity,



reduced absenteeism, decreased staff turnover, and improved staff health and wellbeing.

- Workplace sexual harassment affects around one in five people aged 15 years and older, and four out of five harassers are men. Employers have a legal responsibility to create safe work environments.<sup>1</sup>
- According to estimates, Australian employers are losing \$1.3 billion annually as a result of violence against women. This is 6% of the \$21.7 billion it is costing the Australian economy each year.<sup>2</sup>
- Businesses also stand to benefit financially from preventing violence against women – for every woman who is spared this violence, \$1,969 in annual production costs can also be spared.<sup>3</sup>

### Key activities to prevent violence against women

The following are the key activities that workplaces can engage in to promote equality and respect:

- Promote women's participation and opportunities.
- Challenge violence supportive attitudes, gender stereotypes and roles.
- Think critically about structures that might reinforce inequality.

### 3. Internal campaign components

Workplaces have different ways of communicating internally. This list is designed to spark ideas for how you might use the channels in your workplace to show that inequality exists, explain why gender equality is linked to violence against women, and help staff see what they can do to change it. Identify the channels you want to use and head over to Part 5 for suggested resources.



Channel	Content	Purpose
Email	Introductory email, preferably from the CEO	Inform staff about why your workplace is working towards meeting the <i>Workplace Equality and Respect Standards</i> <sup>2</sup> and what they can expect, including priority actions and initiatives.
	Progress reports	Reinforce the message of gender equality and bring staff along by involving them in the accomplishments and key milestones.
	Gauge interest from staff in appointing a workplace equality ambassador, who is able to speak externally about your organisation's commitment to equality and respect	Provide a human face to help engage the public and talk to media about an aspect of the <i>Standards</i> <sup>3</sup> that affects them.
	Staff survey email from the CEO	Collect information to inform the strategic planning process.
	Email signatures	Include messages that work internally and externally.
Team Meetings	See list of helpful resources on page 14 of this document for exercises and questions to generate discussion	Face-to-face discussions are the best way to introduce change, so it's important to take advantage of times that all staff come together.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to Footnote 1

<sup>3</sup> Refer to Footnote 1



	Introduce new policies and procedures	Positively promote any changes to support the transition of the policy into practice.
Internal newsletter	Tips on how to use the skills learned in training	Assist staff to make abstract ideas concrete by offering examples of helpful and unhelpful behaviours.
	Regular articles and videos about the benefits of respectful relationships and gender equality in the workplace	Share a mix of case studies, infographics or video content to appeal to a range of staff and contribute to the workplace conversation.
Intranet e.g. Yammer	Key messages	Repeat consistent messages to help staff understand the link between gender equality, violence against women and the role workplaces can play in prevention.
	Infographics	Communicate complex data visually.
	Change the story video	Clarify the link between gender equality and violence against women.
	Outline organisational response to disclosures of violence	Communicate available support.

Internal social media	Links to relevant articles	Deepen the understanding of the link between workplace gender equality and prevention of violence against women.
	FAQs	Support managers, leaders and staff to feel confident when responding to backlash or resistance.
	Case studies	Humanise discrimination and policy change by providing a face and everyday language.
Notice boards	Posters	Start conversations which challenge traditional gender roles by reversing the stereotypical roles of men and women.
Screensaver messaging	Imagery and infographics	If it is possible to control screensavers centrally then this is a great way to start conversations with visual representations of messages that proactively challenge gender stereotypes and norms.
Induction	Include information about gender equality and respect in your induction program or manual	Set clear expectations about the type of culture you want to create.

## 4. Opportunities

Wherever possible take the opportunity to raise awareness about gender equality. Organise a guest speaker, bring people together for a walk or morning tea, and participate in fundraising or poster campaigns. Remember to consider the equal representation of men and women when organising events and take active steps to prioritise or draw attention to women's representation. Some ideas for event days include:

Date	Topic
25th of every month	<a href="#">Orange Day</a> Based on 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Orange Day is a monthly opportunity to promote actions to prevent violence against women.
20 February	<a href="#">World Day of Social Justice</a> International day devoted to promoting poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social wellbeing and justice for all. The campaign has an annual theme.
8 March	<a href="#">International Women's Day</a> A global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender equality, and has an annual theme.
Third week in October	<a href="#">Week Without Violence</a> Annual global campaign to prevent violence against women
Last Friday in October	<a href="#">Reclaim/Take Back the Night</a> Reclaim the Night is a global women's protest against men's sexual violence. In some countries it is known as Take Back the Night.

November	<p><a href="#"><u>Movember</u></a></p> <p>Described as a movement for men’s health, Movember is a great chance to talk to men about how male stereotypes aren’t helpful.</p>
25 November – 10 December	<p><a href="#"><u>16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence</u></a></p> <p>This international campaign runs from International Day Against Violence Against Women to International Human Rights Day, to symbolically link violence against women and human rights. The campaign has an annual theme.</p>
25 November	<p><a href="#"><u>International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women</u></a></p> <p>A global day to raise awareness about and take action to prevent violence against women.</p>
10 December	<p><a href="#"><u>United Nations Human Rights Day</u></a></p> <p>Marks the day in 1948 when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The campaign has an annual theme.</p>

## 5. Risks and mitigating strategies

It is essential that your workplace:

- provides support for people who have experienced violence
- is confident about how you will deal with expected resistance
- provides a set of ideas that support staff to join the dots between gender inequality, stereotypes, attitudes, workplaces and violence against women.

Issue	Explanation	Treatment
Potential for disclosures	Given that one in three Australian women have experienced violence, when	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equip staff to respond appropriately when someone discloses an experience of violence.</li> </ul>

	<p>you open up the discussion about gender equality, respect and violence against women, it is likely that someone may disclose their own personal experiences of violence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure people and systems protect the privacy of employees who have disclosed.</li> </ul> <p>Ensure employees who have disclosed are not discriminated against or victimised.</p>
<p>Backlash from male workers who reject the idea of gender bias<sup>4</sup></p>	<p>Backlash has been identified as an inevitable response when male dominance, power or status is challenged. This (sometimes aggressive) resistance or negativity can include questions such as ‘What about men?’, ‘Not all men are violent’ and mistaking contributing factors like alcohol for drivers of violence against women.<sup>5</sup></p>	<p>Engaging men in the change process is key. You can support staff who experience resistance by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encouraging men to challenge restrictive gender roles for both men and women</li> <li>• circulating FAQs and <a href="#">facts</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>Consistency of messages</p>	<p>Research shows that staff can find it difficult to make the connection between preventing violence against women and gender equality if the messages are not consistent.<sup>6</sup> Consistency and repetition can help people make the link between attitudes, behaviours, gender equality and violence against women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the key messages in this document.</li> <li>• Check the Our Watch website, particularly the <a href="#">Workplace Equality and Respect</a> page and <a href="#">Change the story</a></li> </ul>

## 6. Helpful resources

There has been a lot of activity, research and project work in Australia to build the capacity of workplaces to prevent violence against women, so it's a good idea to take advantage of these excellent resources. We've collated this list to get you started once you've identified the channels you want to use in Part 2.

Resource	Source
Introductory email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Equal Footing, Booklet 2 – Resource Pack, p. 38</a>, VicHealth</li> </ul>
Staff survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Equal Footing, Booklet 2 – Resource Pack, p. 26</a>, VicHealth</li> </ul>
Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Equal Footing, Booklet 1, p. 7</a>, VicHealth</li> </ul>
Facts and figures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Our Watch</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Workplace statistics</a>, Workplace Gender Equality Agency</li> <li>• <a href="#">Data Explorer</a>, Workplace Gender Equality Agency</li> <li>• <a href="#">Victorian Women's Health Atlas</a>, Women's Health Victoria</li> </ul>
Helpful and unhelpful behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Equal Footing, Booklet 1, p. 65</a>, VicHealth</li> </ul>
Understanding social change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Shifting social norms to tackle violence against women and girls</a></li> </ul> <p>See Section 6</p>
Infographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">National Community Attitudes Survey</a>, ANROWS</li> <li>• <a href="#">Sexual Harassment: Know Where the Line Is</a>, Australian Human Rights Commission</li> </ul>
Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Change the story</a>, Our Watch</li> <li>• <a href="#">It's time to act on Our Watch</a>, Our Watch</li> <li>• <a href="#">Attitudes to gender equality and violence against women</a>, VicHealth</li> <li>• <a href="#">Bystander action on preventing violence against women</a>, VicHealth</li> <li>• <a href="#">Stereotypes in the workplace</a>, Maroondah City Council</li> <li>• <a href="#">Sexual Harassment: Know Where the Line</a>, Australian Human Rights Commission</li> </ul>

Case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Ending workplace sexual harassment: A resource for small, medium and large employers</a>, Australian Human Rights Commission</li> <li>• <a href="#">Stop gendered violence at work</a>, We Are Union Women</li> <li>• <a href="#">What Australian businesses are doing to avoid bro culture</a> Sydney Morning Herald, 2017</li> </ul>
Posters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Equal Footing</a>, Posters, VicHealth</li> <li>• <a href="#">Act@Work</a>, Women's Health Grampians</li> <li>• <a href="#">Unconscious Bias</a>, Queensland Government</li> <li>• <a href="#">Sexual Harassment: Know Where the Line</a>, Australian Human Rights Commission</li> <li>• <a href="#">Make The Link</a> – Women's Health Grampians</li> </ul>
Links to relevant articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">The business case for gender equality</a>, Workplace Gender Equality Agency</li> </ul>



## References

- <sup>1</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *Working without fear: results of the Sexual Harassment National Telephone Survey*, 2012. Available at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/working-without-fear-results-sexual-harassment-national-telephone-survey-2012>
- <sup>2</sup> PwC, *A high price to pay: the economic case for preventing violence against women*, 2015. Available at: <https://www.pwc.com.au/publications/economic-case-preventing-violence-against-women.html>
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- <sup>4</sup> Chief Executive Women and Male Champions of Change, *In the eye of the beholder: avoiding the merit trap*, 2016. Available at: <http://malechampionsofchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/MCC-CEW-Merit-Paper-FINAL.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth (2015) *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia. Available at: <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/0aa0109b-6b03-43f2-85fe-a9f5ec92ae4e/Change-the-story-framework-prevent-violence-women-children-AA-new.pdf.aspx>
- <sup>6</sup> Powell, A., Sandy, L. and Findling, J. (2015). *Promising Practices in Workplace and Organisational Approaches for the Prevention of Violence Against Women*. Report prepared for Our Watch. Melbourne: RMIT University. Available at: <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/5d67c6a4-bc42-425e-85a9-e5c2c1ca71c5/Promising-Practices-Workplace-Organisational-Approaches-PVAW.pdf.aspx>