Power to Prevent: Urgent Actions Needed to Stop Sexual Harassment at Work

Joint statement

We are a group of diverse organisations, unions, researchers, peak bodies, health professionals and lawyers who have come together to say we need to do more to stop sexual harassment in workplaces. Our organisations and research efforts see the effects of sexual harassment on people around Australia every day and how our systems are not working to respond to the issues.

Everyone deserves to be safe at work and in their community. Yet the rates of sexual harassment in Australia are alarming, particularly for women, with 85% having experienced it in their lifetime. Sexual harassment is about more than just individual behaviour. It is a problem that is deeply entrenched within our society and occurs because gender inequality is ingrained in our social and cultural norms, structures and practices.

It’s time that employers and workplaces stamp out sexual harassment. Sexual harassment causes significant harm to individuals, workplaces and society. We know what the solutions are, but we need governments and employers to implement them. We need strong action to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, and we need it now.

We call on State, Territory and Federal Governments across Australia to take urgent and coordinated action to implement the following solutions.

1. **Dedicated prevention efforts to address the underlying gendered drivers of sexual harassment**, which should be part of a holistic strategy to prevent violence against women and promote gender equality in line with *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.*

2. **Stronger and clearer legal duties** on employers to take proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment at work, and strong and effective regulators that have the full suite of regulatory tools and resources necessary to effectively tackle sexual harassment, including as a cultural, a systemic and a health and safety issue.

3. **Access to fair, effective and efficient complaints processes**, including a new right of action under the Fair Work Act, extended time limits, increased transparency of conciliation outcomes where appropriate, and other amendments and resources necessary to address the unique barriers that currently prevent workers who experience sexual harassment from taking effective legal action.

4. **Appropriate advocacy and support for workers** who experience sexual harassment, including access to information, counselling and legal services that are appropriately resourced and coordinated.

5. **Accessible reporting tools**, including piloting an online reporting tool that assists people to report and address problem behaviour and seek support, and identifies trends to assist with prevention and enforcement efforts.

We stand together to call for change to create sexual harassment free workplaces.
List of Signatories (as at October 2019)

1. Alice Springs Women’s Shelter
2. Annie North Inc
3. Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union - Victoria Branch
4. Australian Council for International Development
5. Australian Council of Social Service
6. Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)
7. Australian Discrimination Law Experts Group, Academic forum
8. Australian Education Union - Victoria
9. Australian Lawyers’ Alliance
10. Australian Manufacturing Worker’s Union Victorian Branch
11. Australian Services Union Victorian and Tasmanian Authorities & Services Branch
12. Australian Women Against Violence Alliance
13. Basic Rights Queensland
14. Centres Against Sexual Assault Forum
15. CFMEU Construction and General Division Victoria and Tasmanian Branch
16. Community and Public Sector Union - PSU Group
17. Community Broadcasting Association of Australia
18. Community Legal Centres’ NSW
19. Disability Discrimination Legal Service
20. Djirra
21. Domestic Violence NSW
22. Domestic Violence Victoria
23. Dr Alysia Blackham, Academic
24. Dr Belinda Smith, Associate Professor of Sydney Law School, University of Sydney
25. Dr Cristy Clark, Legal Academic
26. Dr Dominique Allen, Legal Academic
27. Dr Karen O’Connell, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, UTS
28. Dr Paula McDonald, Legal Academic
29. Dr Sara Charlesworth, Legal Academic
30. Drummond Street Services
31. Emeritus Professor Margaret Thornton of Australian National University College of Law
32. Emma Coetsee, Human Rights Consultant
33. Equality Rights Alliance
34. Fair Agenda
35. Federation of Community Legal Centres
36. Finance Sector Union of Victoria
37. Fitted for Work
38. Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC)
39. Gippsland Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance
40. Gippsland Women’s Health
41. Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
42. Gordon Legal
43. Health and Community Services Union
44. Human Rights Law Centre
45. Independent Education Union Victoria and Tasmania
46. International Women’s Development Agency
47. Job Watch
48. Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, UTS
49. Justice Connect
50. Karen Willis, Executive Officer, Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia
51. Kingsford Legal Centre
52. Liam Elphick, Legal Academic
53. Maritime Union of Australia
54. Maurice Blackburn
55. Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
56. Migrant Workers’ Centre
57. Minus18
58. National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC)
59. National Working Women’s Centres
60. Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission
61. Not in My Workplace
62. NOW Australia
63. NT Working Women’s Centre
64. Professor Beth Gaze, Academic
65. Public Health Association of Australia
66. Public Interest Advocacy Centre
67. Rail Bus and Tram Union
68. Redfern Legal Centre
69. RMIT Centre for People, Organisation & Work (CPOW)
70. Ruby Gaea Darwin Centre Against Sexual Violence
71. Sexual Assault Support Service Inc
72. Shop Distributive and Allied Employees’ Association (SDA) National
73. Slater & Gordon Lawyers
74. St Kilda Legal Service
75. Switchboard Victoria
76. Thorne Harbour Health
77. Unions NSW
78. United Voice
79. University of Melbourne Students Union
80. Victoria Legal Aid
81. Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
82. Victorian Council of Social Service
83. Victorian Multicultural Commission
84. Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC)
85. Victorian Women’s Lawyers
86. Victorian Women’s Trust
87. Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc.
88. WestJustice
89. Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE)
90. Women with Disabilities Victoria
91. Women’s Electoral Lobby
92. Women’s Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West
93. Women’s Health Goulburn North East
94. Women’s Health in the South East (WHISE)
95. Women’s Health NSW
96. Women’s Health Victoria
97. Women’s Health West
98. Women’s Information and Referral Exchange Inc
99. Women’s Legal Centre ACT
100. Women’s Legal Service NSW
101. Women’s Legal Service Victoria
102. Women’s Legal Services Australia
103. Women’s Property Initiatives
104. Working Women Queensland
105. Working Women’s Centre South Australia Inc
106. Young Workers’ Centre
107. Youth Affairs Council Victoria
108. YWCA Australia