

# Safe workplaces are inclusive workplaces

Workplace sexual harassment is against the law.

As a boss, it's your job to take steps to keep your workers safe at work.



We asked over 300 workers who had been sexually harassed at work about what makes workplaces safer. They told us that **safe workplaces are inclusive workplaces**.

*"I think when you bring different cultures, you bring different genders, sexualities, and different identities together, there's so much strength in that. [The workplace] becomes a safe space"*

- Hospitality worker, Sydney

They told us, inclusion means *all* workers feel **welcomed, respected, and valued**, regardless of their race, religion, visa status, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability.

They told us that workplace inclusion made them **more comfortable sharing their safety concerns**, including by reporting workplace sexual harassment.

There are steps you can take to improve inclusion and safety at your workplace.

Here are some things workers told us would help:

## WHAT THEY SAID

## WHAT YOU COULD DO

### Celebrate workers' differences

*"I think [it] is enormously helpful that a company can **observe days in a meaningful way.**"*

- LGBTQ+ worker, Adelaide

Acknowledge and/or celebrate important days for workers' cultures, religions or communities, e.g. send out all staff emails to acknowledge important calendar days for certain groups, and why the day is important.

### Have open conversations

*"**Having open and honest conversations about sexual harassment** and what it looks like is extremely important in building a safe and inclusive workplace."*

- Written Submission

Talk about workplace sexual harassment with workers and let them know you take it seriously.

### Listen to workers and take action

*"I would say also, in the workplace, being sure that you are listened [to]. **Like, someone's listening to you with full respect.**"*

- Culturally and racially marginalised worker, Canberra

When you are having conversations, listen respectfully to what workers are saying. Take note of what they share and action their suggestions.

### Model respectful behaviours

*"Somebody who might be going to make a report [of workplace sexual harassment that included homophobia] they're going to say, 'Well, my company [takes homophobia seriously]. We've just had someone...talking about the impacts of homophobia and asking us to consider this.' So, that's going to, **make a workplace feel more inclusive and your [reports] will be taken seriously.**"*

- LGBTQ+ worker, Adelaide

Model respectful behaviours and make it clear that disrespectful behaviours (like racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism, transphobia, ageism etc.) are not okay in your workplace.



## WHAT THEY SAID

## WHAT YOU COULD DO

### Make it clear that all workers should feel safe to make a report, regardless of their role in the workplace

*"Many immigrants are scared to report because the [harasser] is one of the main men in the workplace that the bosses protect. [They say,] 'Why would we report? They already don't listen to us. Do I think they will listen to us now?' There are no rights – **they can't talk to anyone at work because they are scared, the bosses don't respond.**"*

- Migrant worker, regional

Tell your workers that you will take reports of workplace sexual harassment seriously, regardless of who they say harassed them.

Make it clear that people will not be treated badly or unfairly for reporting workplace sexual harassment.

### Build a workplace with diverse workers and leadership

*"We can't understand what we can't understand, and for that reason, **having a diversity of people in the workforce can help prevent workplace sexual harassment.**"*

- Hospitality worker, Sydney

*"Having a way more **diverse leadership team is the absolute bare minimum first step.**"*

- Hospitality worker, Sydney

*"We live in a society with a lot of [diversity]. Quite often I've seen sexual harassment claims measured against what the manager and his friends would think. You do hear comments such as, 'I don't know what they're complaining about' and 'I wouldn't mind if that was said to me'. So, I think a **lack of understanding of both cultural differences and also the intersectionality of various identities is a really big barrier to understanding a lot of [workplace sexual harassment reports].**"*

- LGBTQ+ worker, Adelaide

Build a diverse workforce and leadership by monitoring diversity in workplace recruitment, training opportunities and career advancement.

Workers will feel less isolated, more accepted, and like they can rely on leaders to understand their needs. This helps all workers feel safer and more comfortable to report workplace sexual harassment.



## WHAT THEY SAID

*"A balance of genders and sexual orientations, ethnicity would be best as it would [improve trust] and prevent 'gang-like mentality!'"*

- Written submission

## WHAT YOU COULD DO

Hold workers accountable for disrespectful behaviours, to ensure that *all* workers feel welcomed, respected and valued.

## Ensure workers can report workplace sexual harassment to range of people

*"Have a few different people [available to report sexual harassment to] so that people are comfortable going to them. Because if it's an older white straight male, like maybe someone [who is gay and a person of colour] is not going to feel as comfortable going to that person [to make a report]."*

- LGBTQ+ worker, Perth

Make sure workers can report workplace sexual harassment to a range of people with diverse backgrounds and identities.

Let workers know who these people are and let them choose who they go to.

## Ensure policies and reporting processes meet the needs of different workers

*"Simplify the language, because usually language doesn't help and how their policies are [understood] because it's very legal [and] difficult to understand because you're like 'No, that doesn't apply to me' when it actually does."*

- LGBTQ+ worker from refugee background

To help workers understand policies and processes, make sure they are plain English and/or translated into preferred languages.

If a worker reports workplace sexual harassment, offer them a range of supports and options to best suit their needs e.g., provide a translator (if required), offer cultural supervision, or ask workers if they'd like a support person from their community.



## WHAT THEY SAID

## WHAT YOU COULD DO

### Consult with diverse workers about workplace policies

*"There needs to be more work done to co-design resources with people who've been sexually harassed and recognise [a range of people] not just women, but people with disability, First Nations people, the queer community, people of colour, and culturally and linguistically diverse people.*

*Within the organisation itself, there needs to be mechanisms that people can give feedback on the policies and processes that they have so that there can be that continual improvement on it."*

- Neurodiverse international student

Ask diverse workers to review policies, processes and systems to make them stronger and more fit for purpose.

Let workers know how you have included their suggestions.

### Create opportunities for growth and learning

*"Respecting our [First Nations] history, that there's already laws or knowledge about the right way to treat each other as humans – like in Yolngu kinship... So, if people understood those ancient laws about how men and women are equal... that gives you the confidence or gives women the confidence to be able to share in a public place or do the things that they want to do for the work."*

- First Nations worker, Darwin

Provide training for all workers on important issues and ideas from different communities, including on respectful relationships.

Find out more about **your responsibilities as an organisation or business.**

**We can all do our bit to stop sexual harassment. Learn how you can make your workplace safer.**

Scan the code or contact the **Respect@Work Information Service** on 1300 656 419 or [respect@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:respect@humanrights.gov.au)

