# Key messages

## Acknowledgements

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 peoples past and present.

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## Introduction

This document sets out a range of key messages to support your work to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women in your learning institute. It is written for people working on Respect and Equality in TAFE Taskforceto assist you in engaging different stakeholders in your work.

Stakeholders include:

* TAFE Board members, CEO/executives, and other people in senior leadership positions
* educators, including casual teachers
* middle management
* professional staff and contractors, including security, cleaners, café staff and shuttle bus drivers
* domestic and international students, as well as student support groups, clubs and leadership bodies
* industry partners
* the community.

Key messages are the short, powerful messages you want your audience to hear, connect with and remember. Different key messages will resonate with different stakeholders, depending on their position, motivation, level of interest and potential ability to contribute to gender equality work. It can be helpful to consider each of these factors when deciding which key messages are the ones your particular audience needs to hear.

The document includes key messages and accompanying supporting information that underpins each message. Key messages are divided into three themes:

1. Respect and Equality is good for the TAFE community
2. Respect and Equality is good for staff
3. Respect and Equality is good for business.

Depending on your audience, you might select key messages from one or more themes.

While the supporting information included in this document considers the TAFE sector generally, you can include specific information about your learning institute, staff or student cohort, geographic reach and community, and other relevant factors to assist in connecting to your audience and making these key messages meaningful, engaging and memorable.

## Respect and equality is good for the TAFE community

Table 1: Key messages and supporting information on why respect and equality is good for the TAFE community

| Key messages | Supporting information |
| --- | --- |
| TAFEs are in unique position to promote gender equality to a significant number of people across Victoria. | TAFEs deliver education to some 200,000 students, employ approximately 10,000 professionals across 12 Victorian TAFE institutes and have significant social and community impact through partnerships with local community organisations and support for local community events.[[1]](#endnote-2)  TAFEs are a trusted and respected part of their communities and are in the position to contribute to positive social change in these communities through promoting gender equality and challenging sexism. |
| TAFEs have the access and influence to improve how workers in key industries prevent and respond to violence against women. | TAFEs provide accredited training to many occupations where an understanding of what drives violence against women is fundamental to meeting industry needs, such as aged care, disability, mental health, drug and alcohol, employment services, early childhood, social housing, sports and health and community services.  TAFEs have a unique opportunity to prepare future workers to prevent and respond to family violence and other forms of violence against women.[[2]](#endnote-3)  Building workforce capability is vital in creating a system that works together in response to the complexities of family violence.[[3]](#endnote-4) |
| Every industry has a role to play in changing the structures, attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender inequality, and TAFEs are in a unique position to help future workforces achieve this. | TAFEs provide workplace-based training and pathways into a diverse range of industries, including those that are traditionally male or female dominated, or do not historically feature women in leadership. We need to break down these historical gender divisions in industries if future industry needs are to be met.[[4]](#endnote-5)  By embedding gender equality messaging across all courses and curriculum, TAFEs are in a unique position to see these messages carry into a range of industries by supporting students to become gender equality voices for change.  There is a growing demand and expectation across all industries that workers will have a strong understanding of gender equitable work practices in order to meet legal and ethical obligations and ensure all workplaces enjoy the benefits of gender equality. |
| TAFEs engage an incredibly diverse student cohort and are able to ensure that more people across our community are included in work to promote gender equality and challenge sexism. | TAFEs deliver around 70% of all apprenticeships and retrains a large number of people with skills to help them transition to new jobs.[[5]](#endnote-6)  In 2019 the Victorian TAFE network delivered training to three times as many students from low socio-economic backgrounds as higher education providers, and about four times as many Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students.[[6]](#endnote-7)  TAFE deliver English language and vocational training, helping to address barriers to employment faced by this cohort. Without the conduit provided by TAFEs, many from disadvantaged cohorts would likely be excluded from tertiary education and training and from engagement with society.[[7]](#endnote-8) |

## Respect and equality is good for staff

Table 2: Key messages and supporting information on why respect and equality is good for staff

| Key messages | Supporting information |
| --- | --- |
| Everyone has the right to feel safe, equal and respected at work. | TAFE educators and professional staff have a right to a work environment where they are safe from violence, harassment and sexism at work, and where they feel respected, valued and treated as equals.  One in three people experienced sexual harassment at work in the past five years and four out of five harassers are men. Employers have a legal responsibility to create safe work environments.[[8]](#endnote-9)  Power disparities in society and in the workplace enable sexual harassment. Gender inequality is the key power disparity that drives sexual harassment, both in the workplace and more broadly in society. [[9]](#endnote-10)  Workplace gender equality contributes to preventing violence against women are part of creating of a safe workplace environment. |
| Family violence and violence against women is a workplace issue. | Family violence affects all workplaces, impacting not only on the safety of workers but on their ability to undertake their work. It can result in reduced productivity, absenteeism and lower retention, and can enter the workplace through texts, emails, abusive phone calls and safety concerns for the person experiencing violence and other staff.[[10]](#endnote-11)  Gendered violence can also occur at work and is a serious OHS issue which causes significant physical and psychological injury to women workers.[[11]](#endnote-12)  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.[[12]](#endnote-13)  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.[[13]](#endnote-14)  Having gender equality policies and procedures can assist victim/survivors of family violence and violence against women.[[14]](#endnote-15) |
| TAFE educators have the potential to contribute to a Victoria where all workplaces are safe, equal and respectful. | TAFEs educate and upskill people in trades and services, and support people to engage positively with their community. By considering how educators can promote gender quality within their classes, they can contribute to safe, equal and respectful Victorian workplaces. |
| Everyone has a part to play in promoting a safer, fairer and more respectful world. | Gender inequality affects everyone – women, men, trans and gender diverse people, children and families.  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 know that every workplace conversation, policy and action can either reinforce or challenge gender inequality and the attitudes, norms and practices that drive violence against women.  Workplaces have a vital role to play in creating a Victoria free of violence against women; a state where women are not only safe, but respected, valued and treated as equals in private and public life. |

## Respect and equality is good for business

Table 3: Key messages and supporting information on why respect and equality is good for business

| Key messages | Supporting information |
| --- | --- |
| Preventing family violence has real benefits for workplaces. | Workplaces who respond effectively to family violence experience many benefits, including:   * + improved outcomes for employees affected by family violence   + improved productivity, staff engagement and work satisfaction   + reduced illness and absenteeism   + reduced staff turnover, resulting in lower recruitment and training costs   + reduced legal liabilities.[[15]](#endnote-16) |
| Progressive leaders know that gender equality is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing. | Workplace gender equality is associated with:   * + improved productivity   + increased organisational performance   + enhanced ability to attract talent and retain staff   + enhanced organisation reputation[[16]](#endnote-17)   Gender and cultural diversity are clearly correlated with profitability.[[17]](#endnote-18) |
| Workplaces that promote gender equality are employers of choice for both women and men. | Employee’s value positive workplace cultures and environments that offer gender equality policies and practices, flexible working arrangements and support for employees with family and caring responsibilities.  Workplace policies that support gender equality are an important tool for attracting and retaining talented employees. High performing employees are attracted to companies that have a positive reputation for promoting gender equality.[[18]](#endnote-19) |
| 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. | By becoming leaders in workplace gender equality and violence prevention, TAFEs can use their influence and expertise to inspire and support similar initiatives within the tertiary education sector, industry, and the broader community.  TAFEs are in a unique position to work with industry partners to identify opportunities to contribute to improving gender equality within industry, including through education and training.  TAFEs can also use their voice and influence to encourage accountability from the service providers they engage, including procurement tendering or competitive bidding processes. |

## Endnotes

1. Victorian TAFE Association. (2019). [*Expert review of the Vocational Education and Training Sector: Victorian TAFE Association Response*](https://ourwatch.sharepoint.com/ctp/Crossteamprojects/17.%20TAFE/documents%20that%20have%20gone%20to%20SET/www.vta.vic.edu.au/doctest/publications/position-and-discussion-papers/897-expert-review-of-vet-victorian-tafe-association-response-jan-2019/file)*.* p.7. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
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8. Australian Human Rights Commission. (2020). [*Respect@Work: National inquiry into sexual harassment in Australian Workplaces*](https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/respectwork-sexual-harassment-national-inquiry-report-2020). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
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