

Key policies for preventing   
sexual harassment

Appropriate policies and procedures are crucial in promoting workplace gender equality to prevent violence against women and sexual harassment. While workplaces need to comply with federal and state equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation, embedding a culture of gender equality involves more than compliance with legal requirements. It requires a commitment to promoting respectful attitudes, norms, behaviours and practices. Policies and procedures should reflect this commitment to changing workplace culture.

This brief guidance provides information on key workplace policies for preventing sexual harassment and promoting gender equality. Please note that these factsheets are for general information only and do not constitute legal advice or material that is tailored specifically for your organisation or circumstances.

# The benefits of workplace policies to support equality and respect

Policies and procedures focused on equality and respect are key components of your business’s commitment to gender equality and the prevention of violence against women and sexual harassment. Policies can provide a clear statement of your workplace’s position regarding violence against women, sexual harassment and gender equality to management, staff, clients, stakeholders and the broader community. Reviewing and developing policies can be a valuable learning opportunity for workplaces. It is worth prioritising time and resources to undertake the process thoughtfully to ensure consultation with appropriate staff across the business. Different workplaces will also be at different stages, so adapt this guidance as necessary.

# Basic policies and procedures that supportworkplace gender equality

## Family and Domestic Violence Policy

A Family and Domestic Violence Policy outlines your business’s attitudes to family and domestic violence and the processes you have in place to support staff who are affected by violence or who are using violence. It should include:

* a statement outlining the workplace’s commitment to support staff experiencing family or domestic violence
* provisions outlining support for staff who experience family or domestic violence, which includes additional paid leave. Note that staff are now entitled to **10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave**, applicable from 1 February 2023 or from 1 August 2023, for a small business with fewer than 15 staff
* links to relevant procedures, including Occupational Health and Safety
* a clear process in situations where a member of staff experiencing family violence and their perpetrator are both part of your organisation.

## Workplace Gender Equality Policy

This should include:

* a statement outlining the business’s commitment to gender equality
* provisions outlining initiatives that promote gender equality throughout the workplace and through the employment lifecycle
* links to other relevant policies and procedures, including recruitment, career development and flexible work arrangements.

## Equal opportunity policy

This should include:

* a statement outlining employer legal requirements to eliminate discrimination and sexual harassment at work
* provisions outlining flexible work options; adjustments available for people with disability; and any special measures the organisation is taking to eliminate discrimination in the organisation (for example, women-only recruitment in particular parts of the business)
* links to other policies and procedures, including the complaints procedures for staff.

## Sexual harassment policy

This should include:

* an explicit statement that sexual harassment is unlawful and that the organisation has a legal obligation to eliminate sexual harassment at work
* a statement acknowledging that sexual harassment disproportionately affects women and gender-diverse people but can happen to any staff member
* provisions describing staff rights and responsibilities
* links to other relevant policies and procedures, including the complaints process for staff
* links to appropriate support services.

## Corporate services policies and procedures

This should include:

* a statement about the business’s commitment to promoting gender equality and respectful relationships in all aspects of the business’s work
* a set of procurement principles detailing gender equality compliance requirements
* links to other relevant policies and procedures, including the code of conduct.

## Code of conduct

This should include:

* a statement that all employees, contractors, clients and customers will be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect, regardless of their sex, gender identity, socioeconomic status, cultural background, sexual orientation or level of ability
* provisions outlining actions and behaviours that are regarded as misconduct
* links to relevant policies and procedures, including disciplinary procedures.

# Further information

Our Watch has a range of resources on implementing Workplace Equality and Respect that you can access at [Our Watch – Workplace Equality and Respect](https://workplace.ourwatch.org.au) <workplace.ourwatch.org.au> or contact Our Watch at [equalityandrespect@ourwatch.org.au](mailto:equalityandrespect@ourwatch.org.au)

# 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, and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and knowledge.

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 Australian Government

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