

# Managing resistance and mitigating risk in Workplace Equality and Respect initiatives

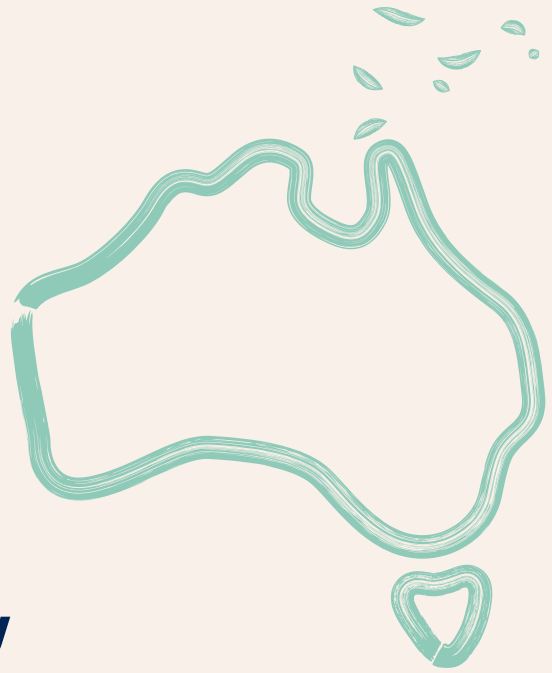
TOOLKIT



**Our  
Watch**

Preventing violence  
against women

June 2026



## Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay respects to Elders past and present and recognise the continuing connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to land, culture, knowledge, and language for over 65,000 years.

As a non-Aboriginal organisation, Our Watch understands that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is an issue for the whole community. As highlighted in Our Watch's national resource *Changing the picture*, the evidence clearly shows the intersection between racism, sexism, and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Our Watch has an ongoing commitment to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, who continue to suffer from violence at a significantly higher rate than non-Aboriginal women. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations who continue to lead the work of sharing knowledge with non-Indigenous people and relentlessly advocate for an equitable, violence-free future in Australia.

# Contents

|                                                                                                           |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b><u>Understanding resistance</u></b><br>to change in workplaces                                         | <b>4</b>  |
| What <b><u>drives</u></b> resistance?                                                                     | <b>5</b>  |
| What does resistance <b><u>look like</u></b> ?                                                            | <b>6</b>  |
| What does resistance at an<br><b><u>individual</u></b> level look like?                                   | <b>7</b>  |
| What does resistance at an<br><b><u>organisational</u></b> level look like?                               | <b>10</b> |
| <b>TIPSHEET</b><br>Addressing and reducing<br>resistance when implementing<br>gender equality initiatives | <b>13</b> |

# Understanding resistance to change in workplaces

**Resistance is an active pushback against progressive programs, policies, and perspectives by those advantaged by the status quo.<sup>1</sup> In other words, people seek to prevent further change and/or reverse those already achieved as a response to actual or perceived challenges to existing hierarchies of power.<sup>2</sup>**

Resistance to the promotion of gender equality can show up in the workplace in a range of ways. It can present in both individual reactions and collective behaviours, and often stems from discomfort, uncertainty, or a perceived loss of status or control. Some people may push back vocally and actively while others may resist more passively, through disengagement or scepticism.

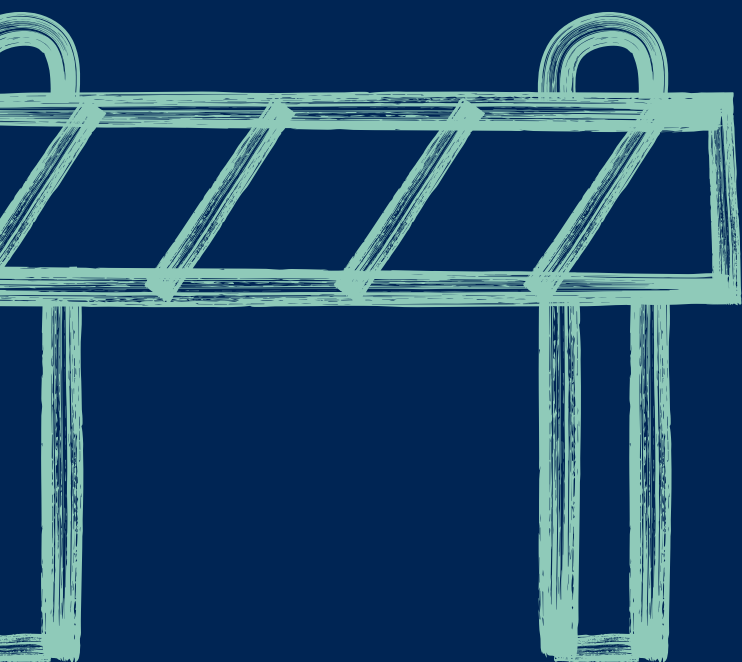
This resistance doesn't mean the change isn't worthwhile. It means it's working. It signals that the status quo is being questioned, and that conversations about power, fairness, and inclusion are taking place.

**This resource is designed for anyone leading or supporting efforts to build workplaces that are safe, gender-equal, and respectful.**

Driving cultural change is essential, but it can also be challenging, particularly where resistance is involved. It's important to view resistance, whether subtle or overt, as a natural part of change. This is especially the case when long-standing norms and power structures are being questioned.

## **This toolkit:**

- ✓ Provides practical strategies to help anticipate, understand, and respond to resistance.
- ✓ Looks at how to mitigate risks and ensure that prevention initiatives are implemented safely and effectively.



# What drives resistance?<sup>3</sup>

**Resistance is often rooted in fear or anxiety about changes to privilege and power, uncertainty about the future, and discomfort with letting go of familiar ways of working.**

When people feel a loss of control or a challenge to what they have always known, resistance can become a way of protecting the status quo. Changes that affect the existing advantages of privileged groups, or that alter accepted workplace norms, can feel personally threatening. For example, staff in male-dominated sectors may reject recruitment or advancement processes designed to increase diversity, particularly when these initiatives aim to bring more women and marginalised groups into the organisation or fast-track them into decision-making roles.

Resistance can also arise from a lack of understanding about what gender is, how it shapes people's lives, and how it contributes to men's perpetration of violence against women.

**Resistance can also stem from an unwillingness or hesitancy to recognise the ways gender influences relationships, behaviours and workplace cultures.**

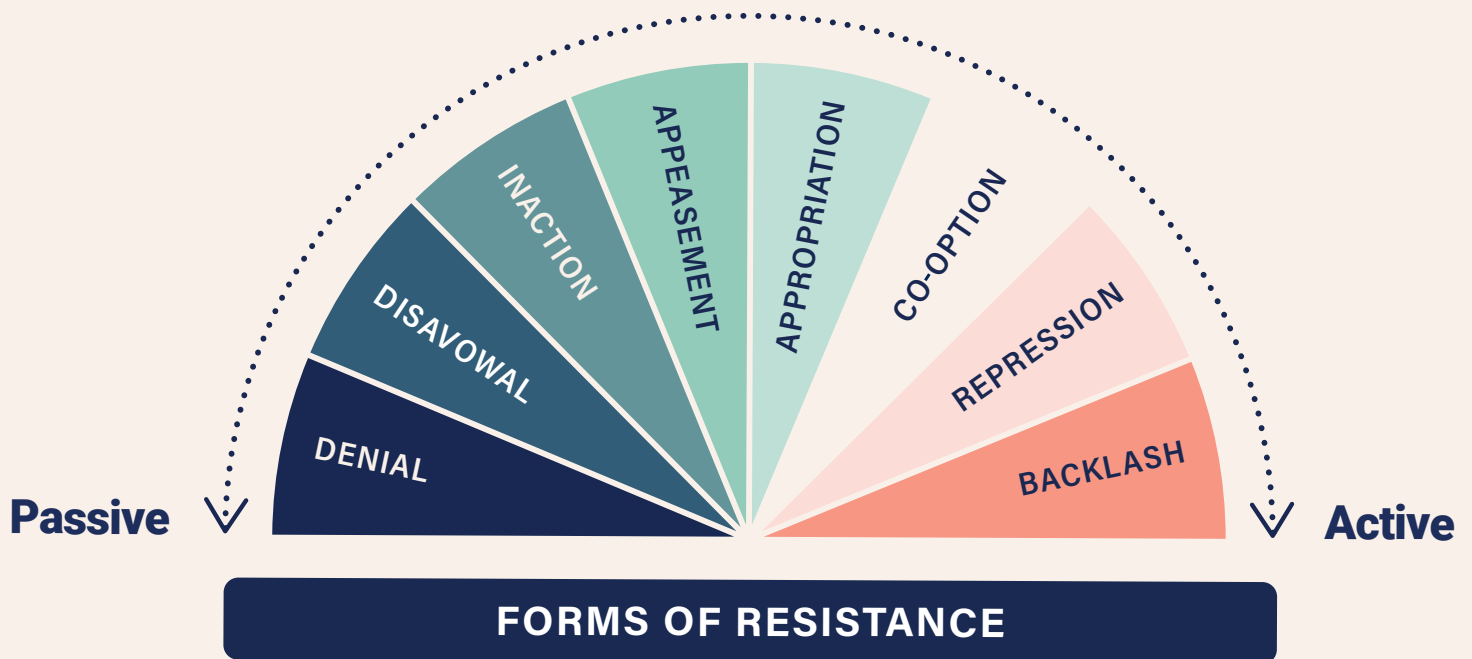
Others may hold tightly to stereotyped ideas about masculinity and femininity, or feel strongly attached to patriarchal norms that underpin gender inequality and violence.

In addition, resistance can emerge from worries about how primary prevention of gender-based violence might affect people's jobs, professional relationships or everyday workplace practices that are no longer acceptable. These concerns can lead to defensiveness, especially when individuals feel their previous behaviours, decisions or positions in the organisation are being questioned. In some cases, resistance stems from a fear of losing face, a reluctance to acknowledge that past practices need to change, even when those changes are necessary for creating a safer and more equitable workplace.



You can find out more about how to engage men in gender equality initiatives in [Creating safer workplaces: A guide to engaging men in the prevention of violence against women](#).

# What does resistance look like?



Source: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/employing-and-supporting-women-your-organisation/resources/vichealth-encountering-resistance-strategies-respond-resistance-gender-equality-initiatives>.

**Resistance can take many forms**

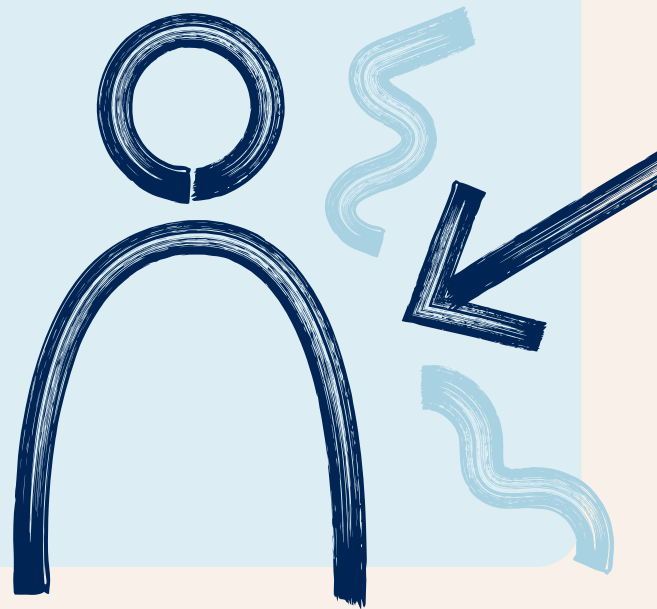
*In (En)countering resistance: strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives, VicHealth visualises the different forms of resistance as moving along a dial from passive to active.<sup>4</sup>*

# What does resistance at an individual level look like?

Individual-level resistance shows up in the everyday ways people push back against or avoid efforts to improve gender equality and respect at work. Sometimes it's subtle and at other times it's more obvious or deliberate.

It can appear in comments, decisions, inaction or direct opposition, all of which can slow progress, reinforce misconceptions, and keep existing inequalities in place.

Sometimes the person resisting may not even realise they're doing so—they may simply be reflecting the norms, practices and structures that protect the status quo. Part of your role is to help them recognise this and support them to shift away from it.



## Denial

### Denying a problem exists and/or challenging the credibility of the case for change

#### EXAMPLES

- **Dismissing** concerns about gender bias in promotion decisions, despite clear disparities in leadership representation: 'We treat everyone the same here.'
- **Downplaying** the relevance or prevalence of workplace gender-based violence: 'That doesn't happen here.'
- Attempting to **discredit** evidence about gender inequality or the gendered nature of violence against women: 'I read an article that said the pay gap doesn't exist.'

## Disavowal

### Refusing to take responsibility

#### EXAMPLES

- **Refusing** to see the individual's role in shaping workplace culture, such as responding to a gender equality initiative by saying 'That's HR's job, not mine.'
- **Complaining** that actions supporting women's advancement are 'unfair' or 'biased.'

This table has been adapted from [\(En\)countering resistance: strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives](#). Additional examples have been added.

## Inaction

### Delaying taking action or refusing to take action

#### EXAMPLES

- Offering team training on respectful behaviour, but **no follow-up actions being taken**: no changes to policies, no discussions, and no accountability.
- **Repeatedly declining invitations** to relevant training or policy-change meetings.
- **Being disruptive or unconstructive** during equality or respect-related training sessions or meetings.
- **Withholding or delaying** required approvals or feedback needed for progress.

## Appeasement

### Placating those advocating for change with gestures of limited impact

#### EXAMPLES

- Hosting a one-off event for International Women's Day but **avoiding deeper conversations or structural changes** that address inequality.
- Making symbolic gestures while **refusing to resource or prioritise substantive action**.

## Appropriation

### Appearing to be supportive while covertly undermining change

#### EXAMPLES

- Publicly supporting gender equality but privately **blocking initiatives that shift power dynamics**, such as flexible work policies or transparent pay audits.
- **Withholding or voting against allocation of resources or funds** for gender equality and respect work.

## Co-option

### Using language or frameworks that are progressive in contorted ways

#### EXAMPLES

- Using equality language to **deflect attention from women's experiences and needs**: 'I support gender equality, but men are the real victims these days.'
- **Reframing equality initiatives as 'reverse discrimination'** to delegitimise them.

---

## Repression

### Reversing or dismantling change initiatives

#### EXAMPLES

- **Quietly disbanding** a new gender equity committee after it raises concerns about workplace culture, with no explanation or alternative offered.
- **Removing, downgrading or sidelining** gender-equality roles, structures or reporting lines.

---

## Backlash

### Aggressive, attacking responses to change

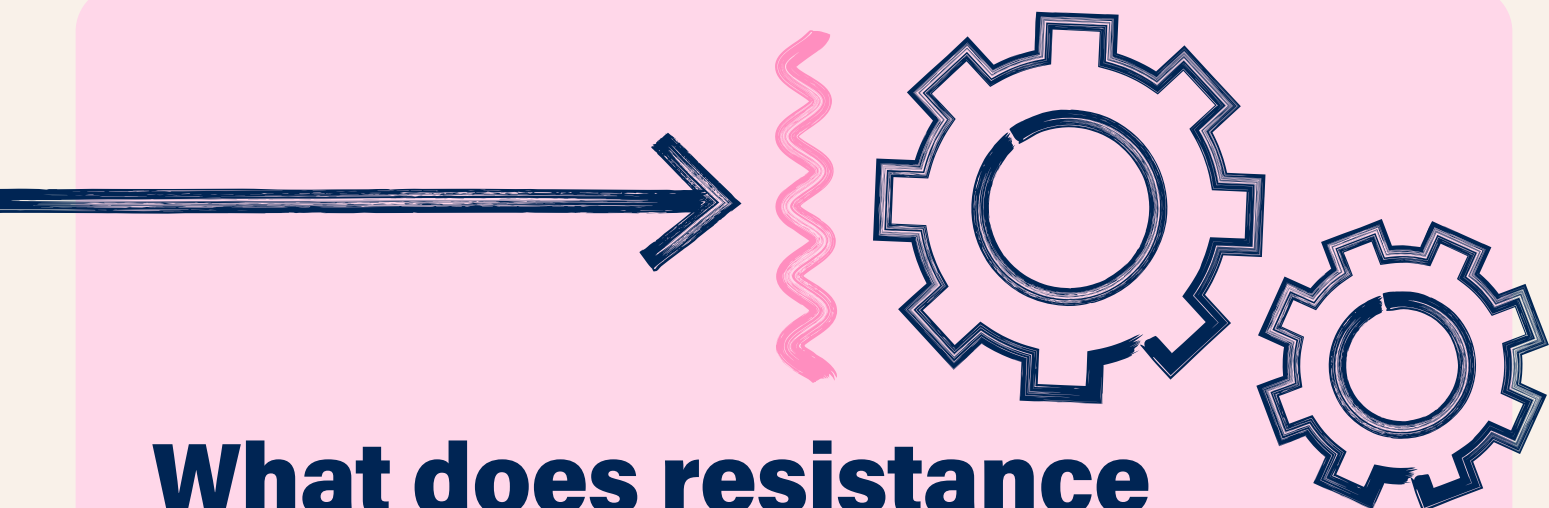
#### EXAMPLES

- **Reacting angrily** to a new respectful behaviour policy, claiming it's 'political correctness gone too far' or that it 'makes it impossible to joke around anymore.'
- **Making disparaging comments** or showing open hostility toward equality initiatives.
- **Undermining, trivialising or de-prioritising initiatives** designed to increase gender equality.
- **Justifying existing inequalities** and refusing to investigate causes or develop strategies for change.

### The best approach for dealing with unconscious resistance is with curiosity rather than judgment.

Resistance often stems from fear of change, perceived irrelevance, or cognitive dissonance, so start by acknowledging concerns and connecting the initiative to shared organisational values like safety, respect, and productivity. Instead of leading with compliance or statistics, use stories and lived experiences to engage empathy and make the issue relatable. Invite participation by asking what would make the initiative meaningful for teams and normalise discomfort as part of learning. Building psychological safety through open dialogue, taking incremental steps, and leveraging respected influencers can help shift attitudes. Finally, frame the initiative as an opportunity to create a thriving, inclusive workplace rather than an obligation—transforming resistance into ownership and support.





# What does resistance at an organisational level look like?

At an organisational level, resistance is defined as patterns of action or inaction in response to change processes and initiatives that suggest collective resistance. These can be actions and structures that seek to halt or roll back the realisation of gender equality but also include inactions, absences and silences. This might involve things like making a commitment to a policy but providing inadequate human

and financial resourcing. It can look like leadership distancing themselves from the change process, and not recognising the ways organisations are gendered in and of themselves. Institutionalised resistance is difficult to 'see' and has become increasingly sophisticated due to the unacceptability of openly challenging the norms of gender equality in countries such as Australia.<sup>5</sup>

## **Structural or procedural**

### **Organisational resistance that emerges through systems, processes, and structures that impede progress**

This may look like:

- lack of resourcing for relevant initiatives (insufficient personnel, budget, or time allocations)
- embedding prevention or gender equality work into temporary, insecure, or low-status roles, signalling low organisational commitment
- unwillingness or refusal to integrate gender equality and prevention efforts into strategic planning, risk frameworks, or KPIs—keeping it 'off to the side' rather than core business
- delaying approvals for policy changes and tying up policy work in unnecessary or onerous review, consultation, or drafting cycles
- inconsistent application of policies, particularly when senior staff or 'high performers' are not held accountable for harmful behaviours.

---

## **Cultural gatekeeping**

### **Behaviours that maintain existing power structures and norms, often making inequality appear acceptable or unchangeable**

This may look like:

- normalising or minimising problematic behaviour (for example, 'He's just like that,' or 'It was only a joke')
- leadership refusing to communicate key prevention messages or undermining agreed organisational commitments
- open hostility or aggression toward initiatives promoting gender equality, preventing violence against women, or addressing sexual harassment
- rewarding or promoting individuals whose behaviour reinforces gendered power imbalances
- prioritising organisational reputation over staff safety, such as downplaying incidents or discouraging reporting to avoid 'bad press.'

---

## **Covert or passive resistance**

### **Resistance that takes a less explicit form, and can be subtle and difficult to identify**

This may look like:

- silencing or sidelining staff who raise concerns, including exclusion from decision-making or opportunities
- tokenistic consultation processes where staff input is sought but ultimately ignored or diluted
- performative compliance such as writing policies without implementing them, running one-off training as a 'tick-box,' or collecting data without follow-through
- passive non-cooperation, such as repeatedly postponing meetings, failing to answer key emails, or 'ghosting' project leads.

---

## **Misuse of power or process**

### **Policy, hierarchy, or governance processes that are used to undermine or delay progress**

This may look like:

- attempts by leadership, management, or HR to discredit evidence about gender inequality or the prevalence and severity of violence against women (for example, 'This doesn't happen here')
- reframing or diluting gendered violence prevention into generic 'wellbeing' initiatives to avoid challenging gendered power structures
- using confidentiality, legal language, or risk management processes to limit discussion or halt action
- prioritising business outcomes over staff safety or equality (for example, shelving proposals because 'now isn't the right time').

---

## Resistance through data or measurement practices

### When data becomes a tool for avoidance rather than accountability

This may look like:

- refusing to collect meaningful data about harassment, sexism, or gender inequality
- manipulating or misinterpreting data to downplay problems ('Only a few formal complaints, so it's not an issue')
- discounting qualitative evidence such as staff stories, focus groups, or exit interviews
- cherry-picking data sources that reinforce the status quo while ignoring those that indicate a need for change.

---

## Resource and decision-making control

### The likelihood of prevention work succeeding is challenged by where power sits within an organisation

This may look like:

- assigning responsibility for major change initiatives to already overburdened staff or teams, effectively setting them up to fail
- a lack of clear accountability so no one is explicitly responsible for driving gender equality or prevention outcomes
- creating additional, unnecessary layers of approval to delay or block progress
- leadership withholding or rationing access to necessary tools, time, or authority needed to implement prevention work.

---

## Undermining external expertise

### Devaluing or controlling the influence of specialists

This may look like:

- rejecting external expert advice that highlights uncomfortable truths or challenges established practices
- only accepting input from consultants who will confirm pre-existing views or avoid challenging leadership
- relying on internal 'champions' with limited expertise instead of investing in specialist training, partnerships, or professional development.

---

## Endnotes

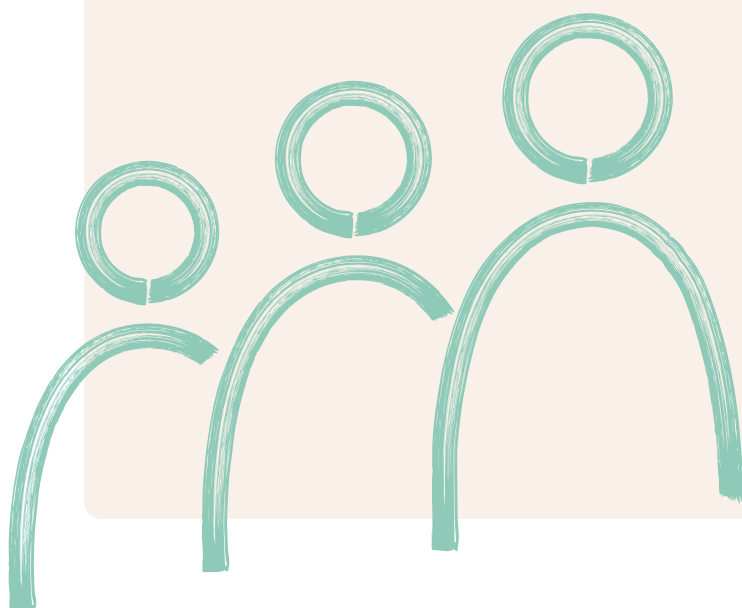
- 1 VicHealth. (2022). (En)countering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives. Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.
- 2 Flood, M., Dragiewicz, M., & Pease, B. (2021). Resistance and backlash to gender equality. Australian Journal of Social Issues, 56(3), 393–408.
- 3 Our Watch. (2022). Understanding, monitoring and responding to resistance and backlash. Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch; Respect Victoria.
- 4 VicHealth. (2022). (En)countering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives. Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.
- 5 Our Watch. (2022). Understanding, monitoring and responding to resistance and backlash. Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch; Respect Victoria.

# Tip sheet: Addressing and reducing resistance when implementing gender equality initiatives

This tip sheet is for anyone in a workplace who is tasked with implementing initiatives to promote gender equality and respect in their workplace and wants to be prepared for managing and mitigating resistance and backlash.

## 1 Be strategic

- ☐ **Anticipate resistance** (it is inevitable) and develop a plan on how you might address it. Not all types of resistance are the same, so one-size-fits-all responses will not work. See [Framework for Identifying and Addressing Resistance & Backlash](#).
- ☐ **Focus on the “moveable middle”;** the group between the entrenched opposition and the fully committed. The moveable middle is unconvinced about the change but equally curious. According to VicHealth, “drawing on our allies (others committed to equality) to work closely with, and then focusing on the ‘moveable middle’, is where change can most effectively begin.”
- ☐ **Identify possible points of resistance** noting that this may present unexpectedly from individuals and / or teams. Some examples of where resistance may arise are:
  - An individual in a position of leadership or influence with broad reach within the workplace, who is known to be against addressing gender inequality.
  - Teams or individuals who show more disrespect towards women (for example, a site where it is known that sexist jokes are common).
  - Any employees who are known to have used violence in the past.
  - Teams or individuals who have demonstrated strong adherence to gender roles.
- ☐ Before commencing any organisational culture change initiatives focusing on preventing sexual harassment, **ensure you have processes in place to support employee welfare**, such as;
  - Employee Assistance Programs
  - Appropriate referral pathways in case someone discloses experiences of violence.



## 2 **Communication is key**

- ☐ **Regularly communicate with employees** using various communication channels (meetings, emails, intranet, etc.) to inform them of upcoming changes and why the organisation needs to adopt them.
- ☐ **Communicate how the changes align with organisational values and leadership priorities.**
- ☐ **Ensure all communications include contact information** so employees know whom to speak to about proposed changes.
- ☐ **Provide opportunities for people to ask questions and give feedback**  
For example:
  - During team meetings or training.
  - Running briefings with the opportunity for questions and answers at the end.
  - Provide a contact to answer questions privately or via email.

With each of these examples it's also important to consider how you will report to staff about any concerns they may raise and clearly communicate how they will be addressed.
- ☐ **Communicate how resistance that contravenes workplace policies or current legislation will be dealt with.** Be explicit about unacceptable behaviours and practices by naming common types of resistance that will not be tolerated.
- ☐ **Develop communications and information packages for employees leading organisational culture change** that they can draw on to respond to resistance in various forums, including online (emails, social media). Draft sample responses to resistance that may be encountered in employee conversations, meetings with external stakeholders' customers, clients and members, and public forums or presentations.
- ☐ **Proactively communicate and model respectful behaviours**, such as a clearly stated commitment by workplace leaders to promoting gender equality and respectful behaviour. This can be used to counter views and behaviours that undermine the validity of gender equality as an organisational goal. The statement could read something like this:
  - "Our commitment to promoting gender equality for the prevention of violence against women is unequivocal and has the full support of the Board [or other governance structure] and all levels of management within the workplace."
  - "In all our work roles and functions, we will demonstrate our commitment to gender equality and respect. We will reject sexism and discriminatory attitudes and confront resistant or hostile attitudes and behaviours that undermine our efforts to promote gender equality and respect."

### 3 Upskill employees

- ☐ **Identify and upskill key employees you consider most appropriate to deal with resistance when it occurs** and who can lead potentially difficult conversations about gender inequality and the need for change.
- ☐ **Provide key employees with training and information packages** with messaging so that they can answer questions about gender equality and violence prevention. In particular, senior executives and managers must be informed about what is expected of them in terms of role modelling the organisational commitment to promoting gender equality to prevent violence against women and manage discussions or comments that express resistance appropriately.
- ☐ **Build employee capacity to manage difficult conversations.** Some simple strategies to discuss with your employees:
  - **Be present in the conversation.** Acknowledge that you have heard the other person's question or concern. Remember that it is easy to misunderstand the concern being expressed. Use active listening to focus on what the person is saying and what is happening during the conversation. For example, "Listening to what you have said..."
  - **Be open.** Always being right or having the final say in a conversation does not allow people to have an open and safe discussion with you. Look for common ground and values that you both agree with. For example, if someone asks about men as victims, you might begin the discussion by acknowledging that you both have a concern for all victims of violence.
  - **Be prepared.** Do your homework on who you will be talking to and what their concerns might be. Make sure you have the right information and evidence about gender equality and the drivers of violence against women and sexual harassment at hand. Plan your conversations and be prepared for the types of questions that might be asked.
  - **Practice talking about violence against women and gender equality.** Talking about these issues is not generally something we do every day. Practice responding in short, clear statements and use evidence and true examples.
  - **Make time for self-reflection.** Reflect on how your discussions went and the assumptions and values you bring to your work.
  - **Respect the other person.** Respect that people come from different starting points, and acknowledge that engaging with these issues can mean changing identity, behaviour and privilege.

# Mitigating risks associated with prevention activities in workplaces

**Prevention work can sometimes have unintended impacts. It often involves open conversations about the nature, prevalence and effects of violence against women, including sexual harassment.**

Because violence against women and children is a lived reality for many people, these discussions can feel personal and emotionally challenging. It's important to recognise this and to think carefully about people's safety and wellbeing. Identifying risks early helps ensure that prevention activities don't unintentionally cause harm.

This short guidance is here to support anyone designing or delivering workplace prevention initiatives, helping you approach this work safely, thoughtfully and with care.



# Risks commonly associated with prevention initiatives in workplaces

## Disclosure

Any activity on preventing sexual harassment and workplace gender-based violence should have a clear process for how to respond to disclosures, including up-to-date referral information for specialised services.

Disclosure means that someone reveals they have directly experienced, witnessed, or perpetrated violence. This may be anyone (an adult or a child) in the workplace, including contractors, clients, and customers either directly or indirectly.

## Working with young people

In some settings, for example, sectors like retail and hospitality, there is mandatory reporting of disclosures made by young people (people under the age of 18 years). You should check with relevant regulatory or statutory requirements for your sector. These will vary across Australian states and territories. Knowing your legal and ethical obligations is important, particularly concerning young people.

## Exclusionary messages

Prevention work can tend to have a focus on male-female relationships. Make sure you consider LGBTIQ+ people and gender diversity. Explore using content that recognises sexual diversity and seek advice from content experts. You may wish to reach out to [Pride in Diversity](#) or [Rainbow Health Australia – LGBTIQ Family Violence Project](#) for resources and guidance.

## Re-traumatising content

With such a high prevalence of gender-based violence in Australia, it's important to consider the triggering nature of prevention activities for some people. Triggering occurs when a conversation, comment or image causes a negative emotional response in someone exposed to it. The emotional response can be fear, sadness, panic, flashbacks, or pain, as well as physical symptoms associated with these emotions. This is usually relevant to people who have experienced or witnessed violence before in their own lives.

Triggering can vary in severity, and the most harm tends to occur when the triggering content has been encountered without any prior warning.

## Disrespectful conversations

Prevention work can often involve discussions on topics that make people feel uncomfortable, and this discomfort may be expressed in inappropriate behaviour, such as yelling at other people in the group, being excessively argumentative, making inappropriate jokes, or intimidating behaviour. These topics can include gendered violence itself, or topics related to gender stereotypes, roles and identity. If not dealt with appropriately, this behaviour can be traumatic for others.

# Steps to minimise risk in prevention initiatives

## STEP 1

### Identify

**Identify potential risks associated with each initiative.**

- Common risks include disclosures of violence, triggering or distressing content, and resistance from staff or leadership.
- Consider contextual or population-specific risks — for example, activities involving young workers, culturally diverse staff, or public-facing environments.
- Engage staff, facilitators, and relevant community partners in risk identification to ensure diverse perspectives are captured.

## STEP 2

### Assess

**Assess both the likelihood and impact of each identified risk.**

- Evaluate how probable it is that each risk will occur, and what level of harm it could cause to individuals or the workplace.
- Classify risks (e.g. low, moderate, high) and decide whether they can be eliminated or reduced.
- Prioritise high-impact risks (e.g. disclosures, triggering, backlash) for immediate mitigation planning.

## STEP 3

### Plan and manage

**Develop clear, documented strategies to mitigate or manage each risk.**

- Record all identified risks, proposed actions, and responsible persons in a risk register or safety plan.
- If a risk cannot be eliminated, identify actions to minimise its impact — for example:
  - Providing preliminary training or information for facilitators and leaders.
  - Consulting with external experts (e.g. family violence services, legal advisors, Pride in Diversity).
  - Adjusting the timing, content, or format of the initiative to reduce exposure or harm.
- Ensure contingency plans are ready for disclosures, emotional distress, or inappropriate behaviour.

## STEP 4

### Monitor and review

**Continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of safety plans and risk controls.**

- Revisit risk assessments regularly during and after activities.
- Identify new or emerging risks that may arise as the initiative evolves.
- Gather participant feedback, facilitator observations, and debrief reports.
- Update safety plans, materials, and facilitator training accordingly.
- Document lessons learned to inform future prevention initiatives.

# Key risk areas & actions

| Risk area                                     | Potential issues                                                                    | Key actions to manage risk                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Disclosure of violence</b>                 | Participants or staff disclose experiences, witnessing, or perpetration of violence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish clear disclosure and referral protocols.</li> <li>Maintain updated referral information for specialised services.</li> <li>Train staff in trauma-informed responses.</li> <li>Build partnerships with local support organisations.</li> <li>Include referral contacts in all prevention materials.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Working with young people</b>              | Legal and ethical obligations regarding minors                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check state/territory-specific mandatory reporting laws.</li> <li>Train facilitators in child safety and reporting processes.</li> <li>Inform guardians of prevention activities.</li> <li>Provide referral options (e.g. Kids Helpline)</li> <li>Allow young people to exit activities safely if distressed.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Triggering or distressing content</b>      | Participants experience emotional or physical distress                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include clear content warnings.</li> <li>Allow participants to step out at any time.</li> <li>Provide quiet/debrief spaces.</li> <li>Ensure facilitators apply trauma-informed principles.</li> <li>Display support service information (EAP, 1800RESPECT).</li> </ul>                                                   |
| <b>Disrespectful or harmful conversations</b> | Disruptive or harmful behaviour during sessions                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set group rules at the outset.</li> <li>Train facilitators to manage and de-escalate conflict.</li> <li>Reinforce respectful conduct expectations.</li> <li>Follow up after incidents with restorative dialogue or coaching.</li> </ul>                                                                                  |
| <b>Exclusionary or non-inclusive content</b>  | LGBTIQA+, First Nations, CALD, or disabled staff feel excluded                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use inclusive and accessible materials.</li> <li>Consult diversity experts.</li> <li>Reflect intersectional identities in all examples and imagery.</li> <li>Offer accessible formats (captioning, plain text, interpreters).</li> </ul>                                                                                 |

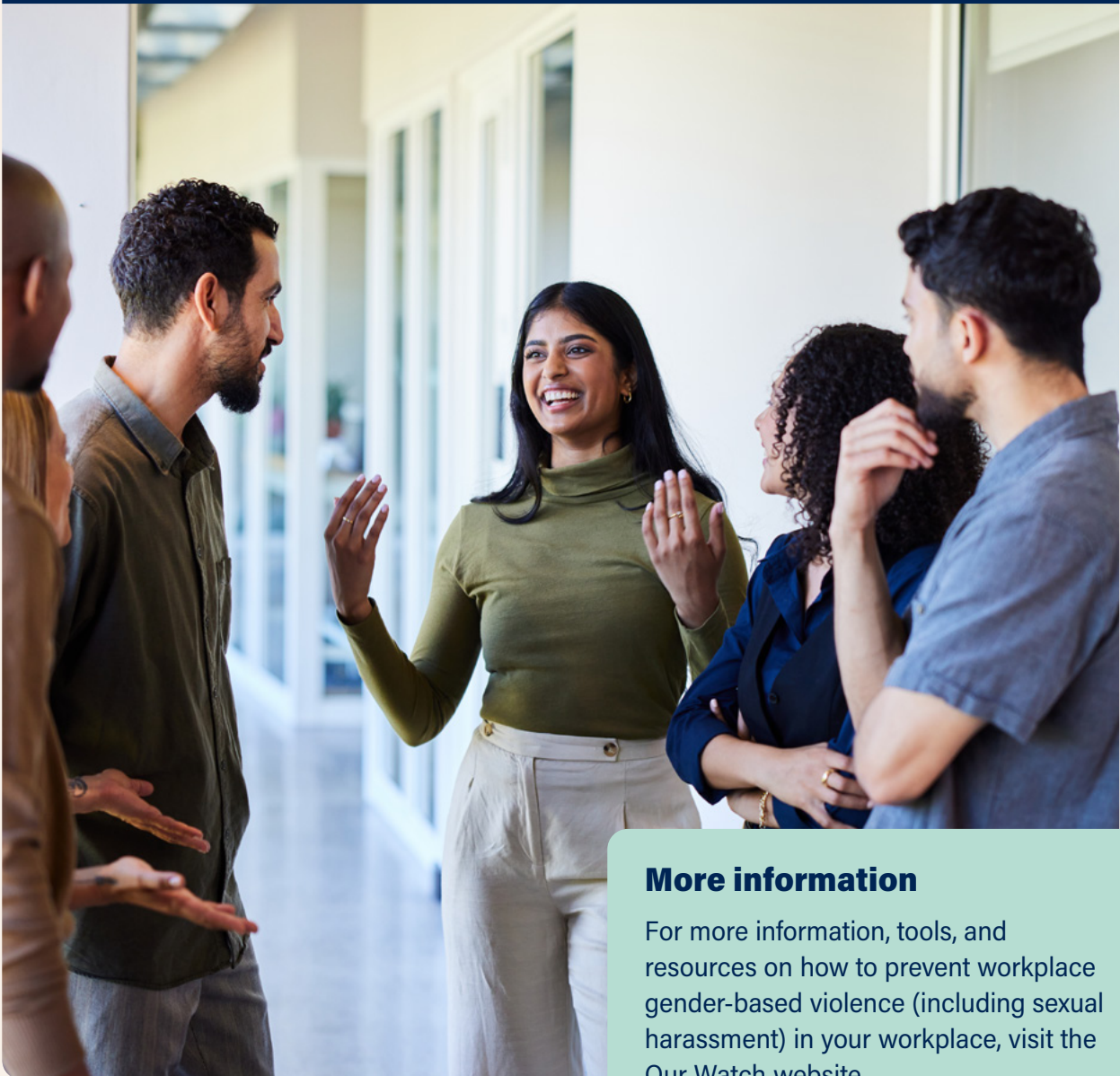
| <b>Risk area</b>                              | <b>Potential issues</b>                                    | <b>Key actions to manage risk</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Organisational resistance or backlash</b>  | Pushback or disengagement from staff or leadership         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Train leaders to manage resistance constructively.</li> <li>▪ Communicate purpose and evidence base clearly.</li> <li>▪ Offer anonymous feedback mechanisms.</li> <li>▪ Monitor workplace sentiment regularly.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Facilitator burnout / secondary trauma</b> | Fatigue or distress from repeated exposure to heavy topics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide supervision, peer debriefs, and self-care support.</li> <li>▪ Manage facilitator workloads.</li> <li>▪ Rotate roles where possible.</li> </ul>                                                                    |
| <b>Legal and ethical compliance</b>           | Non-compliance with legislative or policy obligations      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review against WHS, Fair Work, discrimination, and privacy laws.</li> <li>▪ Maintain confidentiality and documentation standards.</li> <li>▪ Conduct annual compliance checks.</li> </ul>                                 |
| <b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>              | Lack of data or feedback on safety and impact              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use participant surveys and facilitator reports.</li> <li>▪ Record and review incidents.</li> <li>▪ Update risk registers annually.</li> <li>▪ Embed continuous improvement processes.</li> </ul>                         |

# Governance and responsibilities

| Role                       | Responsibilities                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Executive / Senior Leaders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Endorse prevention initiatives.</li><li>▪ Ensure governance and resources.</li><li>▪ Model accountability.</li></ul>   |
| People & culture / HR      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Maintain risk registers.</li><li>▪ Oversee disclosure management.</li><li>▪ Coordinate staff support.</li></ul>        |
| Facilitators / trainers    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Apply trauma-informed practice.</li><li>▪ Uphold group safety.</li><li>▪ Escalate disclosures appropriately.</li></ul> |
| All staff                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Engage respectfully.</li><li>▪ Report safety or inclusion concerns.</li><li>▪ Use available supports.</li></ul>        |
| External partners          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Provide specialist input on gender-based violence, cultural safety, and inclusion.</li></ul>                           |

## Continuous improvement

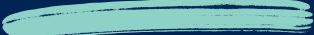
- ☐ Conduct annual risk reviews of all prevention initiatives.
- ☐ Document success stories and challenges to inform future initiatives.
- ☐ Integrate findings into broader WHS and equality strategies.
- ☐ Share learning across teams to strengthen organisational capacity.



### More information

For more information, tools, and resources on how to prevent workplace gender-based violence (including sexual harassment) in your workplace, visit the [Our Watch website](#).

**[ourwatch.org.au](https://ourwatch.org.au)**

**Our  
Watch**  
  
Preventing violence  
against women