

Media release

Australian Government must act on sexual harassment report recommendations

The [Power to Prevent Coalition](#), representing over 100 organisations in the legal, health, community, family violence, business and union sectors, strongly supports the recommendations of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's report into sexual harassment at work. We call on the Australian Government to take this crucial opportunity to join with civil society to make the changes needed to make Australian workplaces safer, healthier and more respectful for all.

The report contains urgent, sensible recommendations for reform which will ensure that workplaces take steps to prevent and deal with sexual harassment more proactively. Workers who complain need access to fair, effective and efficient complaints mechanisms, and employers and regulators must proactively address sexual harassment as a serious health and safety, industrial and equality issue.

Survivors need specialist support to help them deal with the impact of the behaviour, to navigate relevant service systems and to access legal redress.

The report confirms that only a comprehensive approach which addresses gender inequality as the underlying cause of sexual harassment at work, and addresses workplace risks can influence the systemic change that the community requires.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"As a community, we have to work together to tackle the underlying causes of sexual harassment and violence against women."

"Workplaces must be at the centre of this effort and employers must be held to account to meet their obligations to their workers."

"This report sets out a clear pathway forward. We call on the Government to implement the recommendations in full, including:

- clearer work health and safety rules to make sure that employers fulfil their duty to ensure safe, healthy and respectful workplaces for all;
- better access to justice for workers through a quick, easy new complaint process in our workplace laws;
- stronger powers for the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, including the power to investigate industries and sectors which are rife with sexual harassment, such as retail and hospitality."

Quotes attributable to Victoria Legal Aid Equality Law Program Manager Aimee Cooper:

"This report confirms our laws are failing to prevent sexual harassment at work. We know there are rarely consequences for perpetrators or real changes in workplaces to prevent future harassment."

"The Australian Government needs to introduce stronger work, health and safety guidance on what steps employers must take to prevent sexual harassment to make it clear to employers how they can address the risk of sexual harassment in workplaces."

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“Human Rights Commissions play a key role in enforcing discrimination and sexual harassment laws and need stronger powers to investigate and sanction organisations and industries where employers are failing to prevent sexual harassment and gender inequality.”

Quotes attributable to Not In My Workplace Committee Members Rita Butera and Rosie When:

“Not In My Workplace is a collective of CEOs, senior Executives, Chairs and Board Directors from across private, not-for-profit and public sectors making a stand to address sexual harassment in the workplace. As employers ourselves we recognise the need for stronger and clearer legal duties on employers to take proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment at work.”

“The Australian Government must act urgently to implement these reforms. Everyone deserves to feel safe at work and we can make that a reality.”

Quotes attributable to CASA Forum Convenor Karen Hogan

“Centres Against Sexual Assault see many people, mostly women, who experience sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment in workplaces causes immense harm,

Survivors need specialist, expert counselling and advocacy to deal with the impact of the behaviour, and to access legal redress.

We’re calling on the Australian Government to fund that support”.

Quotes attributable to Women’s Health Victoria Policy & Health Promotion Manager Mischa Barr:

“We need to stop sexual harassment at work before it starts. This should form part of broader efforts to eliminate violence against women in our society”.

“Like other forms of violence against women, gender inequality creates the social context in which sexual harassment can occur”.

“To stop sexual harassment at work, Australian workplaces must be safe, respectful, inclusive and equal, and we must address sexism and gender inequality in our community more broadly.”

Read the Power to Prevent Coalition’s [Joint Statement to the AHRC inquiry](#).

Spokespeople are available for interview.

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