# **Power to Prevent: Urgent Actions Needed to Stop Sexual Harassment at Work**

## **Joint statement**

We are a group of diverse organisations, unions, researchers, peak bodies, health professionals and lawyers who have come together to say we need to do more to stop sexual harassment in workplaces. Our organisations and research efforts see the effects of sexual harassment on people around Australia every day and how our systems are not working to respond to the issues.

Everyone deserves to be safe at work and in their community. Yet the rates of sexual harassment in Australia are alarming, particularly for women, with 85% having experienced it in their lifetime. Sexual harassment is about more than just individual behaviour. It is a problem that is deeply entrenched within our society and occurs because gender inequality is ingrained in our social and cultural norms, structures and practices.

It’s time that employers and workplaces stamp out sexual harassment. Sexual harassment causes significant harm to individuals, workplaces and society. We know what the solutions are, but we need governments and employers to implement them. We need strong action to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, and we need it now.

We call on State, Territory and Federal Governments across Australia to take urgent and coordinatedaction to implement the following solutions.

1. **Dedicated prevention efforts to address the underlying gendered drivers of sexual harassment**, which should be part of a holistic strategy to prevent violence against women and promote gender equality in line with *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.*
2. **Stronger and clearer legal duties** on employers to take proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment at work, and strong and effective regulators that have the full suite of regulatory tools and resources necessary to effectively tackle sexual harassment, including as a cultural, a systemic and a health and safety issue.
3. **Access to fair, effective and efficient complaints processes**, including a new right of action under the Fair Work Act, extended time limits, increased transparency of conciliation outcomes where appropriate, and other amendments and resources necessary to address the unique barriers that currently prevent workers who experience sexual harassment from taking effective legal action.
4. **Appropriate advocacy and support for workers** who experience sexual harassment, including access to information, counselling and legal services that are appropriately resourced and coordinated.
5. **Accessible reporting tools**, including piloting an online reporting tool that assists people to report and address problem behaviour and seek support, and identifies trends to assist with prevention and enforcement efforts.

We stand together to call for change to create sexual harassment free workplaces.

**List of Signatories (as at 28 February 2019)**

Alice Springs Women’s Shelter

Annie North Inc

Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union - Victoria Branch

Australian Council for International Development

Australian Council of Social Service

Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)

Australian Discrimination Law Experts Group, Academic forum

Australian Education Union - Victoria

Australian Lawyers’ Alliance

Australian Manufacturing Worker’s Union Victorian Branch

Australian Services Union Victorian and Tasmanian Authorities & Services Branch

Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

Basic Rights Queensland

Centres Against Sexual Assault Forum

CFMEU Construction and General Division Victoria and Tasmanian Branch

Community and Public Sector Union - PSU Group

Community Legal Centres’ NSW

Disability Discrimination Legal Service

Djirra

Domestic Violence NSW

Domestic Violence Victoria

Dr Alysia Blackham, Academic

Dr Belinda Smith, Associate Professor of Sydney Law School, University of Sydney

Dr Cristy Clark, Legal Academic

Dr Dominique Allen, Legal Academic

Dr Karen O’Connell, Associate Professor of Faculty of Law, University of Technology, Sydney

Dr Paula McDonald, Legal Academic

Dr Sara Charlesworth, Legal Academic

Drummond Street Services

Emeritus Professor Margaret Thornton of Australian National University College of Law

Emma Coetsee, Human Rights Consultant

Equality Rights Alliance

Fair Agenda

Federation of Community Legal Centres

Finance Sector Union of Victoria

Fitted for Work

Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC)

Gippsland Sexual and Reproductive Health Alliance

Gippsland Women’s Health

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

Gordon Legal

Health and Community Services Union

Human Rights Law Centre

Independent Education Union Victoria and Tasmania

International Women’s Development Agency

Job Watch

Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, UTS

Justice Connect

Karen Willis, Executive Officer, Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia

Kingsford Legal Centre

Liam Elphick, Legal Academic

Maritime Union of Australia

Maurice Blackburn

Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance

Minus18

National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC)

National Working Women’s Centres

Not in My Workplace

NOW Australia

NT Working Women’s Centre

Professor Beth Gaze, Academic

Public Health Association of Australia

Public Interest Advocacy Centre

Rail Bus and Tram Union

Redfern Legal Centre

RMIT Centre for People, Organisation & Work (CPOW)

Ruby Gaea Darwin Centre Against Sexual Violence

Sexual Assault Support Service Inc

Shop Distributive and Allied Employees’ Association (SDA) National

St Kilda Legal Service

Switchboard Victoria

Thorne Harbour Health

Unions NSW

United Voice

University of Melbourne Students Union

Victoria Legal Aid

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

Victorian Council of Social Service

Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC)

Victorian Women’s Lawyers

Victorian Women’s Trust

Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service Inc.

WestJustice

Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE)

Women with Disabilities Victoria

Women’s Electoral Lobby

Women’s Health and Wellbeing Barwon South West

Women’s Health Goulburn North East

Women’s Health in the South East (WHISE)

Women’s Health NSW

Women’s Health Victoria

Women’s Health West

Women’s Legal Service NSW

Women’s Legal Service Victoria

Women’s Legal Services Australia

Women’s Property Initiatives

Working Women Queensland

Working Women’s Centre South Australia Inc

Youth Affairs Council Victoria

YWCA Australia

Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission



