



CAMPAIGNING FOR SAFER WORKPLACES

On International Women's Day, IEU members call out Workplace Gendered Violence

What is Workplace Gendered Violence?

Workplace gendered violence is any behaviour, action, system or structure in a workplace that causes physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm to a worker because of their sex, gender, sexual orientation or because they do not adhere to dominant gender stereotypes or socially prescribed gender roles.

Gendered violence includes:

- Violence experienced by women because they are women;
- Violence experienced by a person who identifies as LGBTIQ;
- Violence experienced by a person because they don't conform to socially prescribed gender roles or dominant definitions of masculinity or femininity;
- The witnessing (without taking appropriate action) of gendered violence directed at someone else, such as a co-worker.

Gendered violence involves many of the following aggressive behaviours and actions that systems and structures and workplace cultures enable:

Offensive language and imagery	Put downs
Gaslighting	Being undermined in your work or position
Ostracism and exclusion	Rude gestures
Sexual innuendos or insinuations	Sexual suggestions or unwanted advances
Intimidation	Verbal abuse
Threats	Stalking
Physical assault, Sexual assault	Rape

The Rates Of Gender Violence In Australian Workplaces Are Alarming.

Everyone deserves to be safe at work, yet the current rates of gendered violence in Australian workplaces are alarming.

The results of the fourth national survey conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission indicated that there was a high rate of gendered violence in Australian workplaces, with one in three people (33%) having experienced gender violence at work in the last five years.¹

The national survey identified that women were more likely to experience gender violence in the workplace than men.

¹ AHRC Everyone's Business Fourth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian workplaces (2018)

The national survey further identified that when examining workplace gendered violence over the last five years: ²

- Almost two in five women (39%) and just over one in four men (26%) have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.
- People aged 18 to 29 were more likely than those in other age groups to have experienced workplace gendered violence. (45%).
- People who identify as LGBTIQ were more likely than people who identify heterosexual to have experienced workplace gendered violence (52% and 31% respectively).
- People with disability were also more likely than those without disability to have experienced gendered violence in the workplace (44% and 32% respectively).

Hesitation to Report or Seek Support

The national survey also identified that the majority of people who experienced gendered violence at work did not formally report their experience nor seek support or advice.

Fewer than one in five people (17%) made a formal report or complaint and of those who did report, almost one in five people were labelled as a troublemaker, (19%) were ostracised, victimised or ignored by colleagues (18%) or resigned (17%).³

The most common reason for not reporting gendered violence were that people would think it was an over reaction (49%) and it was easier to keep quiet (45%).⁴

Australian Human Rights Commission National Inquiry Into Workplace Sexual Harassment

Following the very significant results of the 2018 National Survey, the AHRC launched a more extensive independent national inquiry into sexual harassment in the workplace. This investigation, led by Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins, aimed to highlight where the system was failing Australian workers, particularly women, and in response, make legislative and business practice recommendations for remedy.

The final report of the inquiry is currently with the Federal Government and we await its release to the public.

A World Without Gendered Violence Is Possible

Gendered Violence is a global phenomenon and as such requires global safety measures.

In June 2019, a ground-breaking Convention and Recommendation to eliminate violence and harassment at work was successfully negotiated and adopted overwhelmingly at the International Labour Organisation in Geneva. This two-year negotiation included ACTU and other world trade unions, ILO member governments and employer organisations.

The historic **ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 260** establishes for the first time, an international standard to prevent and eliminate violence and harassment at work and places obligations on governments to develop national laws prohibiting workplace violence, and on employers to take proactive steps to prevent violence and harassment.

While the Australian Government voted in favour of the ILO Convention 190 and the associated Recommendation 260 to eliminate gendered violence at work, it is yet to ratify the ILO Convention.

² Ibid p7

³ Ibid p8

⁴ Ibid p9

Ratification is the process where the Federal Government states its intention to be bound by the ILO Convention and accepts to apply the ILO Convention in law and practice without reservation.

Until Federal Government ratification, C190 and R206 will remain aspirational.

It Is Time For Action!

It is time to campaign for fair, effective and efficient laws which prevent and protect against gendered violence at work.

It is time to advocate for the Federal Government's ratification of ILO C190 and R206.

It is time to call upon the Federal Government to:

1. Implement a clear right of action within the Fair Work Commission for workers who are experiencing gendered violence
2. Implement an effective capacity for unions to bring representative complaints on behalf of the collective of workers.
3. Strengthen the powers of the Fair Work Commission in relation to gender equality and the establishment of an expert Gender Equality panel within Fair Work.
4. Develop, in consultation with social partners and experts a new Work Health and Safety Regulation and Code of Practice that recognises psychosocial hazards, including gendered violence.
5. Strengthen the Sex Discrimination Act and empower the Sex Discrimination Commission to, not only conduct well resourced inquiries into high risk sectors or industries, but also be able to authorise the courts to penalise for breaches of the Act.

It Is Time To End Gendered Violence In The Workplace

On International Women's Day, IEU members are asked to campaign against workplace gendered violence.

Collectively, we can make change happen. Collectively we can each help to create safer workplaces.

IEU members are encouraged to:

- **Hold discussions in schools to educate colleagues on the need for progress.**
- **Attend their Branch activities during the week of 2 March** (*Specifics of IEU activities around the country are located on the relevant IEU websites*).
- **Discuss with their Branch organiser about accessing more information on preventing Gendered Violence in the workplace**
- **Share your best #EachforEqual photograph with your IEU Branch to show your commitment to building a safer workplace.** Resources are located at <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/SelfieCards>