

Submission 267

NOT IN MY WORKPLACE SUBMISSION TO THE NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK

BACKGROUND

Not in My Workplace is a collective of CEO's, Senior Executives, Chairs, Board Directors and leaders, incorporated under the Incorporated Associations Act in September 2018. We work together to end sexual harassment at work by creating a movement of like-minded leaders who will drive change, gathering and promoting resources to inspire change and build capacity for Boards and organizations and advocating for systemic and legislative change.

We work together to assist Boards and Senior Leadership to eliminate the risks and occurrence of sexual harassment in the workplace. We act as a conduit to connect responsible leadership with peers, tools and resources to create safe and positive workplaces.

On 21 February 2019, 800 leaders met for the first Not in My Work Place Summit in Melbourne, Australia. Business, government and civil society leaders came together to learn and share their concerns and intolerance of the ongoing and systemic sexual harassment in modern workplaces.

Every year in Victoria over 175,000 employees will experience sexual harassment, ranging from inappropriate comments and jokes, to rape and attempted rape. 59% of employees experiencing sexual harassment will suffer from long term consequences, including stress, anxiety and negative mental health outcomes. The costs of poor mental health in a workplace is significant in terms of absenteeism and loss of productivity.

While high profile cases of sexual harassment and abuse are featured in media and court proceedings, every day women and men are subject to intolerable practices in their places of work. Ranging from seemingly harmless to criminal, actions show a deficit of leadership and public commentary on acceptable behaviours. When the poor behaviour is modelled by leading politicians and celebrities the pressure on everyday people escalates. Encouragingly this also works in reverse, when leaders demonstrate positive values and proactive behaviours the culture can improve.

Sexual harassment in the workplace operates with similar culture and systemic failures as occupational health and safety. It is plausible that the same interventions and accountability for leaders will deliver improvements in the workplace environment and reduce incidents of sexual harassment.

RECOGNISING the huge body of work and advocacy that proceeds us, celebrating the progress made over the last decade in strengthening work place protections and in highlighting unacceptable behaviours.

NOTING WITH GREAT CONCERN that reporting of sexual harassment in the workplace has increased over the last 5 years (2013-2018) and that at least 9% of reported rape or attempted rape occur in the workplace.

NOTING an absence of best practice in laws, policies and governance to guide leaders in reducing the incident of sexual harassment in workplaces.

NOT IN MY WORK PLACE

RECOMMENDS THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

1. Recognise that the harm of sexual harassment is equivalent to harm from other Occupational Health and Safety breaches covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act.
2. Develop and support a National Centre of Excellence for the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace.
3. Strengthen and support the role and resources of the National Sex Discrimination Commissioner.
4. Adopts all the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in the workplace.