

Sexual harassment and gendered violence in the workplace



Leeanda Smith
Women's Coordinator
May 28, 2021

Tens of thousands of people attended the @March4JusticeAU rallies across Australia earlier this year chanting “Enough is enough” and demanding an end to gender-based violence and workplace harassment.

While the impetus for the rallies were the revelations from Federal Parliament it was also something bigger. It was the collective frustration felt by generations of women at the lack of progress in gender equality and the glacial pace of change. It was the physical manifestation of the exasperation of women in response to systemic injustice and power imbalances.

The bravery of so many at the marches just to be there, to carry their trauma, to disclose and share their stories, was such an important testimony that these violations are not isolated or rare. Rather, it demonstrated the pervasiveness of gendered harassment and violence in all parts of society and of the extent of family and domestic violence. Attending the rally with colleagues, and seeing many male allies there too, gave hope that the culture of bystanders was changing to “upstanders”.



We must vocally and visibly believe and support survivors and hold perpetrators accountable.

It is highly likely that we will work alongside colleagues, statistically more likely to be women, who have experienced, or are living with, violence or coercive control, and therefore ongoing trauma. We must also be aware of gendered harassment and violence occurring in our workplaces. This could be from colleagues, members of the community or from students.

The Department of Education, as an employer, has the responsibility to ensure that such harassment/violence does not occur. This means behaviour that embarrasses, hurts or frightens others in ways related to their gender or sexuality must be dealt with.

For example, if a group of students behaves aggressively only toward women teachers, this may need to be recorded as gendered harassment/violence as distinct from ‘behaviour issues’, making it difficult to seek additional resources, targeted programs and professional learning.

If there are concerns about a widespread pattern of behaviour, then a focus on gender inequality, sexual

harassment and discrimination should be addressed via the school's welfare programs and other opportunities in the curriculum.

[The Department of Education states that](#) "child protection and respectful relationships education is the responsibility of the whole school community and is most effective as part of a whole-school approach."

Ideally, using a whole-school approach that encourages a review of existing procedures and culture will enable respectful relationships and gender equality practices to occur across the entire school community.

The organisation [Our Watch](#) is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children and has developed resources including a [comprehensive toolkit](#) to support a whole school community approach.

Federation's Information Leaflet [TR9-Dealing with sexual harassment](#) contains information for members who have experienced sexual harassment or who have witnessed another person being sexually harassed.

A key function of the workplace [Women's Contact](#) is to provide support on issues related to sex discrimination and sexual harassment for individuals or groups of members in the workplace.

Where there is an issue of harassment that is broader than an individual complaint, collective action can be taken with the assistance of your Organiser and the Federation's Women's Coordinator.

NSW Teachers Federation Professional Support: 1300 654 369

Family and domestic violence support services:

- [1800 Respect National Helpline](#): 1800 737 732
- [Women's Crisis Line](#): 1800 811 811
- [Men's Referral Service](#): 1300 766 491
- [Mensline](#): 1300 789 978
- [Lifeline](#) (24-hour Crisis Line): 131 114
- [Relationships Australia](#): 1300 364 277