

Safe Work 4 Women

We are a diverse group of organisations and individuals who have extensive experience and expertise in women's rights and gender equity. We are deeply concerned about the inadequacy of the Morrison Government's response to the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's Respect@Work report on workplace sexual harassment, and its failure to commit to implementing an effective pathway to safer workplaces.

We have come together to demand that the Government takes action to deliver safety, justice and equity for all women in Australia.

The issues that led to the March4Justice Rallies have enraged us but not shocked us. Gender-based violence and inequality is widespread and sexual harassment at work is prevalent across all industries and all levels of work. We know that it is experienced differently by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women of colour, gender diverse people, women with disabilities, younger women, older women, and low paid and insecurely employed women.

We demand actions and solutions that work for all.

We send our strong message of support to the courageous women workers in Parliaments who have spoken out. We know that these issues are common to so many women across Australia who experience violence in their homes, communities and workplaces – their experiences are just as important.

A range of measures across many areas are needed to address violence against women and gender inequality. Some of these actions have already been identified and we draw on these now to set out some crucial next steps.

The Federal Government's response to the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's "Respect@Work" report fails to commit to a number of key recommendations that are necessary for women's rights to a safe workplace. In particular, we are concerned about the government's failure to commit to meaningful change in these four areas:

1. *Stronger work health and safety laws to make sure that employers are obliged to tackle the underlying causes of sexual harassment at work.*
2. *Better access to justice for workers in our workplace laws by prohibiting sexual harassment in the Fair Work Act and providing a quick, easy, new complaints process, and providing 10 days paid family and domestic leave as a national minimum employment standard.*
3. *Stronger powers for the Sex Discrimination Commissioner to make her own decisions to investigate industries and workplaces which are rife with sexual harassment, and positive duties on employers to take steps to eliminate sexual harassment.*
4. *Ratification of the 2019 ILO Convention on the elimination of violence and harassment at work.*

We call on the Federal Government to act on these interventions needed for safer workplaces around the country – and to do so before or during the next sitting of Parliament. A meeting of Commonwealth, State and Territory Work Health and Safety Ministers in May will be making a decision about the first of these solutions. The federal government must go into this meeting with a

commitment to stronger work health and safety laws. The Morrison Government cannot claim to care about making workplaces safer without taking the above actions.

The government needs to intervene in the systems that enable gender-based violence in our communities, our homes and our workplaces. A safer future for all women in Australia is possible – but only if the federal government takes decisive action on prevention, resourcing of services and accountability mechanisms, law reform, and workplace sexual harassment. That must include the four actions above.