

Moving to action bystander video

Notes for users

Background

A prosocial bystander culture is one that encourages staff and leaders to move to action when they hear or witness gender discrimination in the form of sexism, harassment, inequitable behaviour or unfair practices.

Bystander action is an area of interest in organisations that have already developed an understanding of the incidence and prevalence of violence against women and the important role that they can play in preventing it. Organisations that have committed to creating a more equitable, safe and respectful culture, and have identified gender equity as an important goal, will find this resource useful in helping their workforce or members understand why the organisation is undertaking such work.

Evidence has shown that organisations that promote gender equity and respect for women can contribute significantly to the prevention of violence against women (VicHealth, 2012)

This video was developed for use in workplaces and organisations interested in learning more about, or already committed to, creating safer, respectful and more inclusive environments.

Snapshot

This online video resource has four chapters.

- **Chapter 1 *Animated infographic***

This chapter summarises some of the key themes and messages from the *More than ready* bystander research and suggestions for organisational change.

- **Chapter 2 *Sexism and discrimination in the workplace***

Five scenarios depicting what can occur in organisations and pointers for leaders, teams and individuals on how to step up to support colleagues and create a healthier organisational culture.

- **Chapter 3 *A call to action for leaders***

A message from VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter, and an overview of the *More than ready* bystander research and recommendations for workplaces and organisations presented by researcher Dr. Anastasia Powell.

- **Chapter 4 *Women's reflections***

Three women discuss their lived experiences of sexism and discrimination in the workplace.

VicHealth has worked with many organisations to build the capacity of those sectors in which we live, work, learn and play to understand that it is everyone's business to prevent violence against women. In addition, VicHealth has funded research on bystander action including the *More than ready* bystander report in 2012. This work has provided the cornerstone for supporting organisations to create a 'prosocial' bystander culture.

Purpose

This resource is designed to introduce organisations to the concept of prosocial bystander action. It provides an overview of the research informing prosocial bystander action, including an evidence-based approach to promoting structural change within organisations.

- It aims to assist viewers to develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes sexism, gender inequity and subsequent impacts in the workplace/organisational context. It does this by providing examples of individual incidents of sexism that prosocial bystanders can recognise and move to action to address.
- It identifies the kind of structural approaches that can assist organisations to proactively promote greater equity of opportunity, such as building workforce capacity as part of a larger strategy to create safer, more inclusive and productive work environments for women.
- It highlights the important link between gender equity and the prevention of violence against women, and provides a glimpse into the impacts of discrimination on women and the costs to the workplace.

After viewing, participants should have a clear understanding of:

- what constitutes gender inequity and sexism
- ways to effectively intervene
- the important roles and responsibilities that organisations have in developing a gender equitable culture.

This resource is designed as an introduction to illustrate the types of work that organisations can embark on to provide greater equity and respect only. It should not be used to replace a thorough work place change strategy including training, auditing and policy development.

How to use this resource

This video can be used as a conversation starter to introduce the concepts of bystander action into organisations, and assist the viewer in becoming more skilled at responding to, and preventing, gender discrimination in all its forms.

It can be used in executive and staff team meetings, professional development forums and workshops, and in a broad cross-section of workplace settings including government, corporate, sports and other community organisations. It will assist in raising awareness amongst leaders, teams and individuals about what constitutes sex discrimination and gender inequity and the tools required to tackle it.

It can be viewed in its entirety or chapter-by-chapter as part of a broader program dedicated to supporting organisational change.

Who should use this resource?

While this resource can be a great starting point for an organisation, it is recommended that it always be part of a broader education/capacity building program around violence against women and its prevention. This video can be presented by trainers, organisational leaders including managers and CEOs, and workplace advocates. However, it is recommended that the presenter has:

- a thorough understanding of the gendered nature of violence and the social construction of gender
- knowledge of the impact and prevalence of violence against women
- a working knowledge of the definitions of violence against women, prosocial bystander action, and the recent research on bystander action
- the ability to deal constructively with resistance to the key messages of this video.

It is everyone’s business to prevent violence against women”

Points for consideration in hosting a session in your organisation

Those presenting sections of this video resource might like to draw out some of the following key points as discussion starters and questions to pose to participants after viewing:

- What does the research tell us about the links between gender inequity and the broader culture of violence against women?
- Why don’t people intervene when they hear sexist language?
- Which of the strategies presented seem most useful? Which ones can you see yourself using and why?
- What do you think your organisation could do to help you feel comfortable being a prosocial bystander?

Please note, bystander action in this context is not focused on getting physically involved in a violent situation. Rather, it includes a much broader range of responses and actions such as confronting a friend or colleague who continually makes sexist jokes, talking to your manager if women are being treated unfairly in the workplace, or challenging spectators or players who use sexist sledging on the sports field.

Gendered focus of this resource

In the course of showing this video queries may arise about the gendered nature and prevalence of violence against women and discrimination in the workplace/organisation compared to men's experience. It is important to note that violence and discrimination against men does exist but the focus of this work is on preventing violence and discrimination against women which, due to the unique drivers of violence against women including gender inequity, requires specific interventions. This, along with the extremely high prevalence rates, requires a specific focus if we are to prevent such violence from occurring in the future.

Creating a workplace where everyone feels respected and safe to talk about behaviour that leaves them feeling uncomfortable will benefit us all.

A note to presenters on safety and referral to services

Due to the prevalence of discrimination, harassment and violence against women, it is likely that in discussing this topic there may be participants who have either experienced, or are close to, someone who has experienced such discrimination or violence. It is important to create a safe environment by advising at the beginning of the session that while this forum is not the place to disclose personal experiences, there are a range of services that can assist including:

For issues pertaining to workplace gender discrimination

- Your own workplace/organisational representative, e.g. Equal Opportunity Contact Officer
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency
www.wgea.gov.au

For issues pertaining to violence against women

- Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service (Victoria) – 1800 015 188
- Men's Referral Service (Victoria) – 1800 065 973
- State-wide Sexual Assault Crisis Line (Victoria) – 1800 806 292

Themes and key messages

This resource can be shown to leaders, teams or be viewed by individuals within your organisation. The key themes and messages to convey when showing this resource include the following:

Leaders

- In Victoria it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of a personal characteristic they have, or that someone assumes they have. This includes, but is not limited to, their age, gender and sexuality.
- Harassment and discrimination in the workplace is common, but often people feel intimidated and reluctant to speak out. As an employer it is your responsibility to establish an environment that allows people to report acts of discrimination, and to respond seriously when people come forward.
- Be proactive in talking about what's ok and what's not, and establishing and modelling inclusive and respectful processes in your organisation.
- Comprehensive strategies that take multiple approaches and work with different tiers within an organisation work best.
- Individuals within small organisations may not have access to many people for support, so it is important that management is proactive in modelling appropriate behaviour and acts in a supportive way when people raise concerns.

- If your workplace does not have any gender equity policies or training in place, research what resources are available in your state or territory to help make your workplace a fairer place.
- Develop strategies and training sessions that involve staff members and allow them to actively participate in developing solutions.

Teams

- You don't have to act alone; we all want to work in a place that feels welcoming. Find female and male colleagues who may be allies, and can support you in developing and proposing strategies.
- Take collective action – bring colleagues together to discuss expectations around fair treatment in the workplace. Use 'we' statements to engage everyone and make it clear that this is about treating everyone fairly.
- The majority of Australians find sexist comments and harassment inappropriate. Chances are, if you feel uncomfortable about something, someone else does too and they'd support you in saying something.

Individuals

- Our aim is to create an environment where everyone feels respected and safe when talking about things that make them uncomfortable, where diversity is welcomed and celebrated and people don't feel they have to conform to stereotypes.
- If you hear someone making sexist and inappropriate comments, call them on it. Most people find this kind of behaviour unacceptable but some may not realise that their comments are inappropriate.

- Challenge people's use of gender stereotypes by asking them to reflect on whether their statement is based on fact. Counter them by using examples of where this isn't the case.
- Directly confronting someone is not the only way to challenge sexism and discrimination. Interrupt or change the conversation to stop someone from making further comments. This shows the speaker that no one is interested in hearing sexist or discriminatory remarks.
- We all live in a broader culture of sexism so people often don't realise that their behaviour is inappropriate. We need to work together to help each other create more welcoming and supportive workplaces. Use humour, or make a joke, to address the situation in a non-confrontational way. If you are in a group situation, use 'we' statements to pull in support from others and show that, as a group, you don't find it funny or appropriate.

Training

For those interested in undertaking training to further build their capacity as a gender equitable organisation, please send enquiries to: capacitybuilding@vichealth.vic.gov.au.

Please Note: The **Moving to Action Bystander short course**, which explores the themes of this resource in more depth, is designed for organisations who have already undertaken foundational workplace training on the prevention of violence against women.

Further reading

More than ready: bystander action to prevent violence against women in the Victorian Community Research Report (2012)

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/search/bystander-research-project

'Stepping in': a bystander action toolkit to support equality and respect at work. A resource for State Sporting Associations (2014)

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/search/bystander-action-toolkit

Know where the line is (2014)

The Know where the line is national awareness-raising strategy with a range of online campaign resources and research on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces.

www.knowtheline.com.au

Encourage. Support. Act! Bystander approaches to sexual harassment in the workplace (2012)

www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/encourage-support-act-bystander-approaches-sexual

Men speak up: a toolkit for action in men's daily lives (2011)

www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/Research_series/Men_speak_up_Flood_2011.pdf

VicHealth research and publications

Visit the preventing violence against women section of the research and publications page for other relevant research summaries and reports.

<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications>



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