

SECTION 3:

United teams

“...team support for an agreed way of addressing sexism, gender discrimination and sexual harassment...”

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE
[AN EVIDENCE REVIEW: SUMMARY REPORT]. VICHEALTH 2012

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INFORMATION SHEET

8. Implementing bystander action in your team

People are more likely to speak up against sexist language, sex discrimination and sexual harassment if they believe they will be supported.

This can come from colleagues and teammates who share the aim of building a fair and respectful environment for women.

To implement bystander action effectively, it is best to have your work teams actively involved. Achieving this requires teams to reflect on their shared behaviours and on whether they:

- support a fair and respectful work environment for women
- encourage team members to raise issues and challenge individual and group interactions.

This reflection can take place in discussions led by managers who can guide teams to:

- identify whether the types of behaviours they individually or collectively engage in may be sexist, discriminatory or harassing
- identify and agree on the types of behaviour they want to be present in their team
- identify and agree on strategies to modify or change individual and collective 'unwanted behaviours'
- identify and agree on the 'ground rules' that support team members speaking up and challenging sexist language, sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

The purpose of these discussions is to enable your work teams to take responsibility for their work environment and their individual and group behaviours, and recognise the value of bystander action as a key strategy to keep workplace behaviour on track.

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CHECKLIST

Team checklist

Question	Yes	No	Partly	Ref
1 Do we have an agreement about how we behave as a team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A21
2 Do we discuss what our policies and procedures say about how we should behave at work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A10
3 Are we able to identify sexist, discriminatory and harassing behaviours that may be happening in our team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A20
4 Do we have an agreed process to deal with conflict in our team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	E6
5 Do we have an agreed process to give each other feedback about our behaviours?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A16
6 Do we regularly check in to see how well we are working together as a team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A14
7 Do we have ground rules to guide team members to take bystander action?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A23
8 Do we actively encourage equal participation from everyone in team meetings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	E6
9 Do we take steps to build a welcoming, respectful and inclusive culture in our team and organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A26
10 Do we take collective responsibility for addressing sexist, discriminatory and harassing behaviours in our team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A22 A24
11 Have we made a collective agreement to use bystander action in our team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A25
12 Are we committed to providing a fair and respectful workplace for women?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A24

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ACTION OPTIONS

20. Preparing to do bystander action

In a workplace, people are most likely to take bystander action in a supportive team environment.

It is important that your team has a shared understanding of sexist language, sex discrimination and sexual harassment and how these behaviours and practices can happen at work.

Use a team meeting to discuss the behaviours and practices that you want to address through bystander action:

- Clarify definitions of sexist language, sex discrimination and sexual harassment.
- Identify potential examples of sexist language, sex discrimination and sexual harassment in team environments.
- Discuss the impact such behaviours can have on team members.

21. Agreeing on behaviours

For bystander action in teams to be effective, team members need to agree on the behaviours they will and will not engage in to support a fair and respectful workplace for women.

Use a team meeting to develop some 'ground rules' for team behaviours that support the use of bystander action:

- Identify team behaviours and language that will help provide a fair and respectful workplace for women.
- Identify ways to strengthen helpful behaviours.
- Identify ways to address unhelpful behaviours including bystander action.
- Identify ways to monitor team behaviours.

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ACTION OPTIONS

22. Addressing sexist language

The use of sexist language in a workplace contributes to an environment in which women are not valued or treated with respect, and team members should use bystander action to address it.

This means your team needs to understand what sexist language is and how it affects women in the workplace.

Use a team meeting to discuss the use of sexist language and develop some ground rules for the use of non-sexist language in the workplace, including: **E10**

- during team meetings
- in office conversations
- in email, telephone and written communication
- on your intranet and website.

Points for discussion:

- What constitutes sexist language?
- Examples in our team.
- What harm does it do?
- What about having fun?
- What about when women use sexist language?
- The link between the use of sexist language and violence against women.

23. Implementing bystander actions

To build acceptance of bystander action in your organisation, staff should understand and agree on how it will be implemented in their team environments.

Use a team meeting to clarify the use of bystander action.

E12

Discuss:

- how the team will use bystander action in the team
- the pros and cons for the team in using bystander action
- what may help or get in the way of taking bystander action
- 'ground rules' for taking bystander action, including assessing whether a situation is safe to do so.

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ACTION OPTIONS

24. Team practice

Your team will most likely need some time to get used to taking bystander action. Practising bystander action in your team environment will build familiarity and confidence.

Use a team meeting to practise bystander action using role-plays. Debrief the role-plays, and discuss the application of bystander action in your team.

Debriefing questions:

- What did you do well in the role-play?
- What would you have done differently?
- What further skills and knowledge do you now think you need?
- How did you feel when you were taking bystander action?
- How did you feel when your behaviour/language was challenged?
- How did you feel when you watched that role-play?

25. Champions

It is important your team maintains its commitment to taking bystander action as a strategy to address sexist language, sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

Identify or elect 'bystander champions' who motivate and support staff to speak up and challenge sexist language, sex discrimination and sexual harassment and are the 'go to' people for information and support about bystander action.

E11

This role can be rotated around your team, so all team members become bystander champions in your organisation.

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ACTION OPTIONS

26. Monitoring impacts

Your team's use of bystander action should be reviewed at regular intervals to check that it is making a positive contribution to relationships and helping to build a fair and respectful workplace for women.

Team members can take turns to complete the checklist to review your team's progress. [E13](#)

When the checklist has been completed, use a team meeting to discuss the results. [E14](#)

Ask:

- What has worked?
- What hasn't worked?
- What other strategies could be introduced to strengthen bystander action?
- What else could be done to build a respectful workplace for women?

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EXAMPLES

10. Using non-sexist language in our team

When we are speaking or writing, we want to avoid making sexist or discriminatory references about women's:

- age or appearance
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- family responsibilities
- physical attributes
- health or disability
- cultural background.

11. Role of bystander champions

The role of a bystander champion is to:

- model appropriate behaviours and attitudes
- advocate for the use of bystander action in your organisation
- model the use of bystander action in team settings
- support others to use bystander action
- talk about the use of bystander action in sports
- help others practise bystander actions
- keep informed about and have input into SSA policy and procedures relating to bystander action.

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EXAMPLES

12. Ground rules for the use of bystander action in our team

In this team we will:

- speak up and challenge sexist, discriminatory or harassing behaviours or practices in our team in a respectful and fair manner
- receive feedback about sexist, discriminatory or harassing behaviours and practices with goodwill and agree to make appropriate changes
- report to management any concerns about the safety of our team members
- support colleagues who take bystander action
- support colleagues who experience sexist, discriminatory or harassing behaviours or practices
- not gossip about incidents where bystander action has been taken, but talk about them in appropriate settings such as team meetings and supervisions.

13. Checklist for reviewing use of bystander action in our team

How often did you observe:	Yes	No	Not sure
More agreed bystander actions being used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less sexist language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less sexist behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less sexist humour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greater participation of women in meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More talking about team behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved relationships between male and female staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved working together on tasks/projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More people talking about using bystander action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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EXAMPLES

14. Assessing the advantages and challenges of using bystander action

Using bystander action	Positive results for team	Challenges for team
Short term		
Long term		