

Media Release

The Hon Danny Pearson MP
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PREVENTING GENDERED VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

The Andrews Labor Government is inviting workplaces to apply for a share in more than \$4 million towards new initiatives that help to prevent work-related gendered violence, including sexual harassment.

Applications are now open for the WorkSafe WorkWell Respect Fund, which will support large-scale projects and initiatives with grants of between \$500,000 and \$1 million each.

The fund is being launched alongside the WorkWell Respect Network, which will bring workplaces together through events and learning opportunities, to share knowledge to better prevent and respond to gendered violence at work.

These initiatives come as the Labor Government and WorkSafe ramp up the *'It comes in many forms'* advertising campaign to eradicate gendered violence at work.

The campaign's message that gendered violence should never be accepted as "just part of the job" is also featured on a six-storey 3D billboard in Melbourne's Bourke Street Mall.

Featuring in the campaign, Katherine Teh, vividly recalls her experiences of gendered violence at work, beginning at 15 when she started her first job at an aged care facility where a resident made inappropriate comments to her.

Told by her then-boss to grow a thicker skin, it was the first of several similar experiences, including having her body judged before being hired at a bar, and later having a promising career opportunity scuttled after she rejected a sexual proposition from a senior colleague who told her she would be sued if she reported it.

It was this experience that galvanised Ms Teh, who began to fight back by calling out perpetrators. She's now encouraging other victims to do the same.

Alarming, the Australian Human Rights Commission's 2022 survey found that one in three people had experienced workplace sexual harassment in the previous five years.

The WorkSafe WorkWell Respect Fund and the WorkWell Respect Network respond directly to a recommendation of the Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment established in 2021.

Work-related gendered violence includes any behaviour that affects the health and safety of someone because of their gender, sexual orientation, or because they don't conform to gender stereotypes.

It can include sexual harassment, stalking, verbal abuse, unwelcome comments or gestures, or threats of physical violence and can involve colleagues, supervisors, clients, or customers.

Applications for the WorkWell Respect Fund and tenders to lead the WorkWell Respect Network close on Friday, 19 May. To apply visit worksafe.vic.gov.au.

Quote attributable to Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC Danny Pearson

"We can all play our part to prevent gendered violence or sexual harassment and it certainly has no place in Victorian workplaces – everyone has the right to a safe and respectful workplace."

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Quote attributable to Minister for Women Natalie Hutchins

“Equality and a safe workplace are non-negotiable – we are continuing to invest in new initiatives that will support everyone regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.”

Quote attributable to Katherine Teh

“These early experiences of gendered violence were incredibly upsetting, but as I moved through my career, I became more desensitised – it felt like the only way to cope.”