

# Circular 2019-09 | Respectful workplaces framework and prevention of sexual harassment — model action plan



**Victorian  
Public Sector  
Commission**

<b>Circular Number</b>	2019-09
<b>Issue date:</b>	15 July 2019
<b>Application:</b>	All Victorian public sector bodies
<b>Resources</b>	<a href="#">Respectful Workplaces Framework (DOCX, 920KB)</a> <a href="#">Sexual Harassment Model Action Plan (DOCX, 120KB)</a>
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## Key points

- Sexual harassment is unlawful and prohibited. Sexual harassment in the workplace can take various forms and can be directed at anyone. It can be physical, spoken or written. Unwelcome conduct does not need to be repeated; a one-off incident can be sexual harassment.
- Building on the Victorian Public Sector Commission's (VPSC) *Model Policy for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace* (Model Policy) and *Guide for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace* (Guide), the VPSC has issued the *Respectful Workplaces Framework* (Framework) and *Prevention of Sexual Harassment – Model Action Plan* (Model Action Plan).
- Together, these documents seek to support departments and Victoria Police in preventing sexual harassment through improved systems and processes, and

changing cultural norms.

- The Framework uses a gender equality approach to identify six best practice principles for the development of safe and respectful workplaces. Mindful of departments' differing approaches to address sexual harassment, it uses a maturity model approach to build consistent practice across departments and Victoria Police by June 2021.
- The Model Action Plan identifies possible activities, outcomes and performance measures against the six best practice principles. Departments and Victoria Police are encouraged to use the Model Action Plan to develop a tailored action plan that addresses their current organisational circumstances and priorities for achieving maturity over the next two years.
- The Framework includes a biannual progress report to the VPSC by departments and Victoria Police against their action plans (every September and March), using an agreed minimum data set. It also includes a consolidated annual report by the VPSC to the Victorian Secretaries Board (VSB), every December.

## Updates

This is the first version of the Framework and Model Action Plan.

## Requirements

The [Equal Opportunity Act 2010](#) requires organisations to take proactive steps to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Framework and Model Action Plan seek to support the Victorian Public Service to fulfil this positive duty.

When developing action plans, specific organisational requirements should be taken into account.

## Background

On 22 March 2018, VSB released a statement affirming its commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment in the Victorian public sector.



To progress this work, VSB endorsed that the Sexual Harassment in the Victorian Public Service Working Group (Working Group) be set up under the auspices of its Integrity and Corporate Reform Sub-committee (ICRS). This Working Group is chaired by the Deputy Commissioner.

The Working Group is undertaking a program of work to promote best practice prevention and response to sexual harassment in the workplace, and the delivery of consistent outcomes. A key focus of the Working Group is on ensuring that those who have experienced sexual harassment have confidence to come forward.

The Model Policy and Guide were endorsed by VSB and published by the VPSC in 2018. The Framework and Model Action Plan have also been endorsed by VSB.

## Scope

This Circular applies to all public service bodies.

All Victorian public sector entities are encouraged to review their policies and strategies for preventing and responding to sexual harassment in the workplace, using the Framework and Model Action plan as a guide.

## Date of application

Effective 15 July 2019.

