

Circular 2018-06 | Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**

Circular Number	2018-06
Supersedes:	Circular 2018-03 Model Sexual Harassment Policy and Practice Guide issued 25 September 2018.
Issue date:	23 November 2018
Application:	All Victorian public sector bodies
Resources	Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace at https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/resources/prevention-sexual-harassment-workplace/
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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 all persons. 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 Secretaries Board statement on sexual harassment, the Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) has issued the **Model Policy for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace** (Model Policy). The Model Policy was developed by a Working Group under the auspices of the Integrity and Corporate Reform Subcommittee of the Victorian Secretaries Board.
- To support the Model Policy, a **Guide for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace** (Guide) has also been developed. Together, these documents promote

consistent practice across the Victorian Public Service and sector. They will help organisations to ensure that they are working to prevent sexual harassment and support those who are harmed by such behaviour.

- Employees who have experienced sexual harassment are strongly encouraged to come forward. We all have the right to work in a safe, inclusive and respectful environment where we are all valued and feel supported to speak up. The Victorian Public Service and sector is focused on ensuring we all feel safe, respected and equal.
- Disclosures of sexual harassment will be treated with discretion in order to protect an employee's personal privacy and maintain confidentiality as much as possible.
- Bystanders, including colleagues, who witness or are aware of sexual harassment, can play an important role in preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. When grounded in behaviours of integrity and respect, action taken by colleagues can positively impact on defining workplace culture.

Updates

This is the first version of the Model Policy and Guide.

The Model Policy and Guide are now available on the VPSC website at <https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/resources/prevention-sexual-harassment-workplace/>

Requirements

The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* requires organisations to take proactive steps to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Model Policy and Guide seek to support the Victorian Public Service and sector to fulfil this positive duty.

When updating policies and procedures, specific organisational requirements should be taken into account.

Background

The Victorian Secretaries Board Statement on Sexual Harassment was released on 22



March 2018.

The Sexual Harassment in the Victorian Public Service Working Group (Working Group) was set up under the auspices of the Integrity and Corporate Reform Sub-committee of the Victorian Secretaries Board. The Working Group is chaired by the Deputy Public Sector Commissioner, and has representation from across departments, including Victoria Police.

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.

Scope

This Model Policy applies to the Victorian Public Service. Victorian Public Service bodies are encouraged to revise their policy and procedures on sexual harassment in line with the Model Policy. The Guide assists organisations in implementing their sexual harassment policies.

All Victorian public sector entities are encouraged to revise their policy and procedures on sexual harassment, ensuring these are informed by the Model Policy and Guide.

