



MCA INDUSTRY TOOLKIT

The minerals industry is committed to eliminating sexual harassment in its workplaces and has adopted a national Industry Code that provides clear expectations on members to establish both preventative and response measures to address sexual harassment.

This document is part of the MCA Industry Toolkit that has been developed for our members and their employees and comprises a suite of Fact Sheets, Guidance and Templates.

GUIDANCE

How to support persons affected by sexual harassment – trauma informed care

Experiencing and recalling bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault can commonly result in trauma. Trauma occurs when our ability to cope is overwhelmed. Trauma can have a significant effect on your physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. The impacts of trauma may surface at any time, particularly when survivors tell or repeat their experiences, or when they encounter similar experiences are shared by others. Trauma looks different for people depending on their experience of trauma and other factors such as exposure to previous traumatic events, access to support and mental health status¹.

Significant effort has been afforded to understanding the requirements of recovery for those impacted by sexual harassment and assault, resulting in the identification of a range of factors that positively influence post-assault recovery. These include the belief of peers, both personal and professional, the absence of victim stigmas, and the rebuilding of a sense of control and trust through acceptance.

A person-centred approach ensures we listen to, empower, respect and support impacted people. This means the individual impacted chooses how they wish to report it and is involved in the decision about how to handle the issue. It respects the wishes and best interests of the person impacted, but does not mean they solely decide the organisation's response or consequences for the offender because the organisation still owes a duty of care to others².

Trauma Informed Care and Practice

Responses to sexual harassment and violence have evolved as the nature and complexities of this type of incident has become better understood. An example of how best practice responses can be informed is the contemporary framework of Trauma Informed Care and Practice (TICP).

TICP is a strengths-based framework emphasising physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both service providers and survivors. Responding appropriately to trauma and its effects requires knowledge and understanding of the nature and impacts of trauma, and broad-based workforce education and training to build

¹ Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces (2021) <https://humanrights.gov.au/set-standard-2021>

² Champions of Change Coalition <https://championsofchangecoalition.org/resource/preventing-and-responding-to-sexual-harassment-resources/> (Page 68)

capacity. Collaboration between people with lived experience and carers, policy makers and service providers is also required and an appropriate response applied across service systems³.

Research shows that by facilitating recovery through trauma-informed care, re-victimisation can be minimised and self and community wellbeing and connectedness can be promoted.

The framework of TICP is based around core principles, which implemented collectively intend to achieve best practice in trauma-informed care⁴.

1. Understanding trauma and its impact
2. Promoting safety
3. Supporting an individual's control, choice and autonomy
4. Ensuring cultural competence
5. Safe and healing relationships
6. Sharing power and governance
7. Recovery is possible
8. Integrating care.

It is important that this is tailored to suit mining contexts; it should be adapted for implementation that is consistent with the workplace culture, with due focus on factors including an often overrepresentation of one gender, and the influence of remote and often isolated work environments.

Further opportunities for organisations, leaders and employees to support affected persons, include:

Organisations/Leaders

- Engagement of employee assistance program (EAP) providers for professional counselling and coaching services.
- Engage in listening sessions with employees, particularly vulnerable groups, to collate feedback on culture and best practice prevention measures.
- Training of employees and leaders on the impacts of sexual harassment on individuals to ensure a sufficient workplace knowledge base of appropriate identification and management techniques for sexual harassment incidence.
- Build capability of internal teams to respond appropriately to people impacted by sexual harassment.
- Provide the person impacted with the opportunity to guide the course of action taken, respecting their wishes for informal or formal action, where possible.
- Maintain a focus on the core principles of TICP as detailed above.
- Provided multiple avenues by which impacted persons can report, including an anonymous option. Update impacted persons on the progress of the investigation into the allegations and any police or regulatory engagement by the company and communicate findings.
- Share organisational learnings, in consultation with impacted persons.
- Consider restorative responses, such as a company representative apology to an impacted person, where conduct is substantiated.

³ NSW Mental Health Coordinating Council <https://www.mhcc.org.au/resource/ticpot-stage-1-2-3/>

⁴ Principles identified and adapted based on knowledge about trauma, its prevalence and impact. Findings of the Co-Occurring Disorders and Violence Project - Moses, DJ, Reed, BG, Mazelis, R & D'Ambrosio, B 2003.

Hearing and responding to disclosures of sexual harassment can be distressing and traumatic. It is important that organisations also put in place support mechanisms for supervisors and colleagues, who may also have their own experience or are providing care for someone that has experienced sexual harassment.

Individuals

Employees can provide practical and emotional support to impacted persons:

- Acknowledge and recognise the traumatic event occurred
- Listen without interrupting and avoid excessive talking
- Help explore options and encourage them to seek professional help

It is also important to remember there are things to avoid, too. For example, touching should be avoided without permission, and impacted persons should never be blamed for incidence of harassment.

Additional resources

Supplementing the release of *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* (November 2021), the Australian Human Rights Commission and Full Stop Australia released Trauma-informed guidance to support individuals and managers.

The guidance includes key principles in responding to a disclosure, examples of how disclosure might manifest in the workplace, and suggested trauma informed responses⁵.

⁵ Trauma-informed guidance, *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* (2021) <https://humanrights.gov.au/set-standard-2021> (Page 7-8)