

Submission to

Australian Human Rights Commission

National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces

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submission

Introduction

The Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union (QNMU) thanks the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces* (the inquiry).

Nursing and midwifery is the largest occupational group in Queensland Health and one of the largest across the Queensland government. The QNMU is the principal health union in Queensland covering all classifications of workers that make up the nursing workforce including registered nurses (RN), registered midwives (RM), enrolled nurses (EN) and assistants in nursing (AIN) and personal care workers (PCW) who are employed in the public, private and not-for-profit health sectors including aged care.

Our more than 60,000 members work across a variety of settings from single person operations to large health and non-health institutions, and in a full range of classifications from entry level trainees to senior management. The vast majority of nurses and midwives in Queensland are members of the QNMU.

The QNMU welcomes the *National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces* and supports the Commission's work in helping make human rights a reality for everyone, everywhere, every day.

General comment

Our submission responds in general terms to the inquiry.

We support the submissions of our federal body, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) and the peak body for Australian unions, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).

The results of the Commission's *2018 National Survey* identified that one in three people have experienced sexual harassment at work in the last five years. This is a significant increase in the prevalence rate recorded in the previous surveys (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018). In most cases these were perpetrated by a man and were ongoing (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018). This data paints a disturbing picture of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces.

The QNMU does not condone or support any form of sexual harassment. Our sexual harassment policy states employers have a responsibility to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and to deal with sexual harassment in an appropriate manner (Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union, 2017) Our members must be able to work in a safe workplace free of sexual harassment.

The QNMU commends the Commission in undertaking this important inquiry into sexual harassment in Australian workplaces. Sexual harassment is not inevitable nor acceptable and every effort must be made to remove this behaviour from our workplaces and society.

References

Australian Human Rights Commission. (2018). *Everyone's business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces*. Retrieved from https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/AHRC_WORKPLACE_SH_2018.pdf

Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union. (2017). Sexual harassment policy.