

A photograph of a man and a woman in work attire. The man, on the left, is wearing an orange high-visibility jacket and has grey hair. The woman, on the right, is wearing a dark blue vest over an orange shirt and has her hair in a ponytail. They are standing in front of a building with dark grey horizontal siding and a white-framed glass door. The woman is smiling and looking towards the man.

# KEEP IT DECENT

**Guidelines for Safe and  
Respectful Workplaces.**

Proudly supported by



**WAIHANGA ARA RAU**  
Construction and  
Infrastructure  
Workforce Development Council



**HANGA-ARO-RAU**  
Manufacturing, Engineering  
and Logistics  
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# About the guidelines.

The Keep it Decent: Guidelines for Safe and Respectful Workplaces were launched by Waihanga Ara Rau and Hanga-Aro-Rau Workforce Development Councils with the goal of supporting all women in trades to fulfil their potential.

The development of the Guidelines are supported by the Tertiary Education Commission and was developed in collaboration with our trade industry and community partners as well as women in trade stakeholder groups. The guidelines are a key deliverable of the Industry Equity Project 2022.

The Keep it Decent: Guidelines for Safe and Respectful Workplaces feature practical actions for trade employers and managers to improve workplace culture for women who traditionally are marginalised at work.

You can read the full Keep it Decent: Guidelines for Safe and Respectful Workplaces below.

You can also find more resources for supporting women in trades at [TradeCareers.co](https://www.tradecareers.co.nz/) Online Toolkit and Equity Directory.

Let's make yours a great workplace for everyone who works there!

**This is how we do things in  
the Trades.**

# MESSAGES FROM



## Waihanga Ara Rau.

“We’re committed to supporting everyone in the trades so that they feel safe and respected at work. Trade Employers asked us for support to identify practical actions they could take to improve workplace culture with regards to bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment and these guidelines are the first of many steps we are taking with them toward addressing this change. I encourage all leaders to determine how they are supporting women in the workplace. Let’s move from talking about diversity to making a difference on the ground. These guidelines are a practical tools to enable leaders in big companies with HR departments down to the ‘Man with a Van’ and his small team, to build safer and more respectful workplaces for all employees.”

**Philip Aldridge**

## Hanga-Aro-Rau.

With only 15 per cent of New Zealand’s trades workforce made up of women – and just 2.6 per cent “on the tools”, coupled with a growing national skills shortage, enticing wāhine into trade careers has never been more important. For these women to thrive and grow long-term we must learn to support them better. These guidelines set out a baseline of what is expected from everyone in our industries to make sure we create workplace cultures where everyone is welcome. Industry wide, we make are making this commitment to promote inclusion and diversity, observe fair employment practices, and not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

**Samantha McNaughton**





# INTRODUCTION

## As an industry our greatest asset is our people.

It's essential that we can all work in an inclusive environment where we are safe and respected.

In our industry everyone is welcome.

**We all bring a unique set of backgrounds, experiences, and skills to our work, and that's a great thing. It helps make us more successful.**

Why is that? Because the diverse nature of our workforce reflects the diverse nature of our customers and helps us to do better work.

# What motivated the creation of the guidelines?

We've got a problem in our industry.

Suicide rates in the construction industry are off the charts. This industry loses one person on average a week to suicide, the highest rate of any industry in New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

Most of us working in the trades (69%)<sup>2</sup> report we have been harassed or bullied, or made to feel stink at work. We have a massive labour shortage in the trades, and there are very few women in our industry. Wouldn't it be great if everyone felt and was respected at work. Our industry would retain more great people, men and women alike.

**When we see or hear harassment or bullying happen, many of us stand by and don't speak up.**

It is not good enough.

**Together, as an industry, we all need to step up and sort this out.**

<sup>1</sup> Mates in Construction stats.

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Commission 2022, Experiences of Workplace Bullying and Harassment in Aotearoa New Zealand.

**A recent report by the Human Rights Commission into bullying and harassment in New Zealand showed:**

- **30%** of people working in the construction sector in the last five years have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment behaviour
- **31%** of people working in the construction sector in the last five years have experienced at least one racial harassment behaviour
- For **69%** of workers subjected to harassment or bullying in the construction sector, the perpetrator was someone in a more senior position
- **17%** of people working in the construction sector have 'OFTEN' or 'ALWAYS' experienced at least one workplace bullying behaviour in the last 12 months
- Within the construction sector, **73%** of those who were identified as the perpetrators of bullying were men

**We are all entitled to work with dignity, and free from fear of any kind of harassment or bullying.**



# OUR GUIDELINES

**These guidelines set out what is expected from everyone in our industry to make sure we create workplace cultures where everyone is welcome and respected, at all times.**

Industry wide, we make a commitment to promote inclusion and diversity, observe fair employment practices, and not tolerate discrimination of any kind.



# Keep It Decent.

We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of each person in our workplace.

We have zero tolerance for any form of sexual harassment, discrimination or bullying.

Everyone has a responsibility to promote appropriate standards of behaviour at all times. This includes during work hours while working on and off-site, and out-of-hours while attending work-related functions.

## Keep It Decent means:

### 01. **Being our best.**

We are kind, fair, honest, and constructive.

### 02. **Calling it out.**

We shut down and report all kinds of harassment. There is no place for racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory talk in our industry. Victimisation of any person who raises a complaint is unlawful.

### 03. **Bringing out the best in others.**

We are open to – and respectful of – viewpoints and perspectives that differ from our own. Our differences don't divide us. They make us better.

### 04. **High five the good stuff.**

We all lead by showing good examples.

# YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

## ...as an employer:

In Aotearoa New Zealand we have laws to keep us all safe.

Harassment, sexual harassment, and bullying are common workplace risks.

Managing these risks, as all other workplace risks, is a requirement for businesses under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

*The Human Rights Act defines sexual harassment as unwelcome or offensive sexual behaviour that is repeated or serious enough to have a harmful effect, or which contains an implied or overt promise of preferential treatment, or an implied or overt threat of deferential treatment.*

Like harassment and bullying, sexual harassment is often subtle and undermining, and the longer this behaviour exists in the workplace the harder it is to deal with.

The Employment Relations Act (ERA) provides protection against sexual and racial harassment, which are also covered by the Human Rights Act. Sexual and racial harassment can give grounds for a personal grievance under the ERA or a claim under the Human Rights Act.

New Zealand is also in the process of ratifying the IPO convention clause 190 Violence and Work which outlines recognizing the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

**Employers legally cannot treat an employee differently. That is discrimination. You're not allowed to use the following things against an employee:**

- age
- nationality
- ethnicity
- gender
- sexual orientation
- disability
- religious beliefs
- marital status
- employment status
- political opinions.





## What is sexual harassment and bullying?

Sexual harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome, or uninvited behaviour of a sexual nature, which makes a person feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated.

Sexual harassment may involve any conduct of a verbal, nonverbal, or physical nature, including written and electronic communications, and may occur between persons of the same or different genders.

This includes some forms of behaviour that may also be considered to be an offence under criminal law, such as physical assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault, stalking, or obscene communications.



## Sexual harassment includes:

### Verbal

- Cat-calling and whistling
- Offensive or sexist jokes or remarks
- Intrusive questions about a worker's sex life
- Telling vulgar jokes or sexual anecdotes
- Suggestive comments or jokes, insults, or taunts of a sexual nature
- Intrusive questions or statements about your private life
- Unnecessary familiarity, such as deliberately brushing up against you or unwelcome touching
- Making insulting comments about someone's gender identity or sexual orientation, or asking about someone's sexual orientation
- Telling lewd jokes or sharing stories about sexual experiences – even if this is not directed at you but done in your presence to cause you discomfort



## Persistent behaviour

- Being regularly hassled for a date or followed home by a coworker
- Following them around or paying excessive attention
- Sending unwanted suggestive or lewd emails, letters, or other communications
- Inappropriate advances on social networking sites

## Physical

- Unwelcome touching, patting, pinching by the boss, a co-worker, or customer
- Physically blocking a person's movements i.e. standing in their way
- 'Accidentally on purpose' brushing up against a person
- Staring or looking their body up and down

## Sexual misconduct

- Accessing sexually explicit internet sites
- Requests for sex or repeated unwanted requests to go out on dates
- Sexual offensive images at work including screensavers or calendars of a sexual nature
- Sharing sexually inappropriate images or videos, such as pornography or sexual gifs, with co-workers
- Displaying inappropriate sexual images, posters, or calendars in the workplace
- Making sexually offensive gestures, remarks, or facial expressions

# What is not considered sexual harassment?



Consensual behaviour between adults which is welcome and reciprocated, such as flirting, is not sexual harassment.

The most simple thing you can do is ask if it is okay before you make any kind of comment or action.

**For example: “I was raised to hold the door open for ladies, is that sexual harassment?”**

The best thing to do is to talk through all these things in your workplace. You can also ask, and say *“Are you okay with me opening the door? I was raised to do it and I like to, but I want to make sure it is not demeaning to you”*. The other person now has the opportunity to say yes or no and give their consent.

## **Checklist:** Is it sexual harassment?

Here are some quick questions to ask yourself if you are not sure if you are crossing a line:

1. Am I in a position of power?
2. What is my motivation?
3. Is my action listed as part of the guidelines as harassment or bullying?
4. Have I established consent?
5. Would I feel okay if my actions were published online or in the news?
6. Would my loved ones be proud of my behaviour?

# BULLYING

Common examples of workplace bullying include:

- Offensive language regarding a person's physical or mental disabilities or differences
- Pointing out or continually alluding that someone's too fat, too old, or too stupid
- Threatening behaviour
- Being aggressive, intimidating, or humiliating
- Spreading rumours
- Displaying offensive material - especially culturally insensitive
- Playing practical jokes and teasing
- Excluding someone from team or work-related activities
- Purposely overworking an employee, giving too little work, or withholding information which allows them to work effectively
- Pressure to behave in an inappropriate manner
- All kinds of racism

## What is Not Considered Bullying?

- Disciplinary procedures
- Giving constructive feedback
- Telling employees how to do their work
- Performance management reviews

## Did you know?



You can say that you do not wish for your boss to put their hand on your shoulder when giving you feedback; that you do not like compliments emphasising which parts of your body are covered or revealed; that you wish for your boss to stop touching you unnecessarily or being ambiguous when communicating.

# IS THIS OKAY?

**The following scenarios are based  
on real world experience of women  
working in the trades in the past 5 years.**

**“We were drinking and a group of older female colleagues were cracking jokes about a younger male’s appearance, and one of the women slapped the man’s butt. He laughed and I don’t know if he liked it or not. What’s the deal with that?”**

Any unwanted touching or sexualisation - of anyone - is not okay. Drinking lowers our inhibitions and makes it difficult for people to make good choices. Anyone who uses a position of authority to gain a sexual favour or relationship is using coercion. Not okay.

“I was just joking” is not an excuse for racist behaviour. It’s a way for people to deflect responsibility for acting unprofessionally. People who cross the line often say they weren’t serious or that other people are too sensitive. In fact - joking about this is a red flag for unsafe workplaces and toxic culture because it normalises bad behaviour. Not cool - it’s 100% harassment.

**“There is this one person who always makes comments about racial stereotypes, it’s really lame and people laugh awkwardly - what’s the deal?”**

**“On my first day at work, I watched a male worker take photos of a woman’s backside as other men watched quietly. The photos were soon circulating around the factory. On a break, I went up to the woman and asked if she was OK. The woman just shrugged, ‘I’m used to it. Shit like that happens all the time here.’”**

Just because it has been happening doesn’t make it okay, and it is against the law. It is 100% harassment. Go to your manager and make a complaint.

**“The guys at work all give me shit about not drinking - it’s not allowed in my religion. They knock off early on a Friday and get hammered and they all get promoted. I want to fit in but I don’t drink. Is that harassment?”**

You can’t be overlooked for promotion just because you don’t drink. It’s illegal to discriminate against people based on their religion.

‘It stops being casual conversation when it is unwanted. It’s unprofessional to talk about your sex life at work and crosses the line when it makes a colleague feel uncomfortable. Keep It Decent.

**“There are a bunch of guys who overshare what they got up to on the weekend - way too much info about their sex lives and they way they talk about the people they have slept with, is really off”**

**“After too many drinks I asked one of my staff to come home with me, I know it was bad but what do I do now?”**

You're the one with the power, you need to apologise sincerely and make sure that the person feels safe and respected. You crossed a line and you need to sort it out. You can not fire her, or change her job because you are uncomfortable.

Yep - the workplace is not the place for these images. Sexualised images are not okay and are considered harassment.

**“The guys at work have a calendar with naked women on it, it's in the boy's loo so it's not on public display. If the women in the office can't see it, is that harassment?”**

**“We had a roof-shout and at the end it was just me and my boss left, we were cleaning up and he kept touching me and asked me to go home with him - I said no but now I am dreading seeing him again on Monday.”**

Drinking makes inappropriate behaviour more likely. Was this person flirting? Was it just for laughs? Was he serious? Research shows that someone with more power - The Boss - tends to see what they want to see. Here the boss mistakes staying late and helping with the clean up as attraction. He didn't establish consent, he's in a position of power. So yep, it's harassment.

**“There is a really nice guy at work who is a hugger - but I really don't like it. I know he is not being creepy but what do I do?”**

You can say that you know he doesn't mean anything by it, but it is uncomfortable for you - you're not a hugger. You can also talk with your boss to let them know it would be a good idea to remind people of the Keep It Decent guidelines. Unwanted touching is never acceptable. You can convey your warmth without touching your colleagues.

It's okay to say someone looks nice. It's not okay to comment about how their body fits into clothing. That's objectification. Suggesting that her body might impress a client could be considered harassment.

**“I said to a colleague that she looked great in a skirt and she should wear it when we go to meet the client - is that okay?”**





**We all have a part to play in making  
our workplace safe and respectful.**



As an organisation we  
pledge to:

**Communicate**

Share the guidelines with your team. Have a conversation about it. Be open, kind, and give everyone space to speak. Discuss the specifics and together decide how you will all integrate it into your workplace.

- Make it clear to every employee that there is zero tolerance for sexual harassment and bullying.
- Talk through the guidelines with your team at your next toolbox session.
- Give a copy of the guidelines to all employees and place guidelines posters in prominent places in the workplace.



## Be Compliant

Harassment is against the law. Build in time to your project planning to make sure everyone is up to speed with the guidelines, on what to do if they need to report an issue, and how you are going to measure success.

- Make sure you have harassment and bullying policies in place. Check out the [WorkSafe sexual harassment guides](#)
- Decide on the process if someone is experiencing harassment or bullying
- Nominate a 'Keep It Decent Champion' this person can be the contact point to deal with sexual harassment complaints – someone who is available to everyone at work and is suitably qualified and experienced.
- Decide what success looks like for your team. Is it having a whānau morning tea and getting to know each other better? Is it checking in each morning?

## Be Consistent

Things will only get better if everyone is consistent. This is not a one week thing, it's a new way of doing things and it's not going away.

- Deal with any complaints in a way that is fair, timely and confidential.

## Change

Talk with your team and acknowledge that we will not always get it right. But we will try. With everyone's help we can get it right. We welcome everyone's suggestions to change, improve their experience, and make our workplace safe and supportive for everyone.

- Commit to making a positive change.

# FOR EMPLOYEES

## What To Do If You've Been Sexually Harassed

Firstly, resistance is key – whether it is a colleague or a boss. We need to express that we do not like the person's behaviour and that we disagree with it, and we do not wish for it to reoccur.

The topics that we have just covered should give you an idea of whether you are a victim of sexual harassment at work, but if you're still unsure, you should take expert advice straight away.

It doesn't matter either who the harasser is, whether they are a manager, contractor, or a colleague. What they are doing is illegal, and if their actions are affecting how you work or making you feel uncomfortable, or even ill, you need to get them to stop.

Here are a few things you can do initially if you are a victim of sexual harassment:

- Write down everything that happens and is said. Include dates, times, and locations and include any witness statements. Keep copies of all written and verbal communications between you and your employer.
- Report the harassment to your boss, supervisor, or human resources department.
- Review your personnel file to keep track of anything that is said or written about you.

The simple fact is that sexual harassment is against the law and if you feel you have a legitimate case, you can file a lawsuit against the offender because there are laws in place to protect you.

An employer is legally required to take steps to ensure their employees do not suffer sexual harassment at work and that any harassment is properly dealt with.

The first thing you should do, assuming that you have already tried to make the harasser stop their behaviour, is to utilise your company's complaint processes. If this doesn't bring a satisfactory conclusion for you, then you have the option to file a charge and go to court.

## Further Support Services are available here:

**Check out these useful links.**

- [WorkSafe sexual harassment and bullying guides, policies and templates.](#)
- Employment New Zealand has a [comprehensive list of resources](#) about bullying, harassment and what employers' responsibilities are.
- [Mentalhealth.org.nz](#) has a handy fact sheet about bullying and what you can do to stop it.
- [RespectEd Aotearoa](#) consultation, training and support for reducing sexual harm in the workplace.
- [Te Aorerekura Strategy](#), Aotearoa's first national strategy aimed at eliminating family and sexual violence.

# FOR EMPLOYERS

## Implementation Strategies for Trade Employers

This is where the rubber hits the road.

We have outlined some ways in which you can put into practice implementing the Keep it Decent guidelines and Pledge.

Remember we are all in this together and you can reach out to the Trade Careers team if you have any questions or need support.



## 100+ Employees

- Ensure you have an up-to-date sexual harassment and bullying policy.
- Ensure all managers and staff are familiar with the guidelines.
- Nominate a dedicated 'Keep It Decent' representative and ensure all staff know who that person is and what their role is.
- Hold workplace anti harassment and bullying training sessions.
- Set a zero harassment and bullying target for the business and develop an integrated strategy and plan to achieve this.
- Incorporate reporting and benchmarking of success into personal and business KPIs.
- Schedule impact evaluations to measure the success and effectiveness of the guidelines in affecting change.
- Include the 'Keep It Decent' guidelines in employment contracts and on-boarding training.
- Display the pledge and guidelines in shared work spaces.
- Lead by example and make sure that everyone knows what the consequences of sexual harassment and bullying are.
- Consider awards for people who are demonstrating and adhering to the 'Keep It Decent' guidelines and pledge.
- Ensure all Senior Management, C Suite and Governance Board are aware of and champion the 'Keep It Decent' guidelines.
- Share across your communication channels that your business has signed up to 'Keep It Decent' Guidelines.



## Less than 100 Employees

- Ensure you have an up-to-date sexual harassment and bullying policy.
- Ensure all managers and staff are familiar with the guidelines.
- Nominate a dedicated 'Keep It Decent' representative and ensure all staff know who that person is and what their role is.
- Hold workplace anti harassment and bullying training sessions.
- Set a zero harassment and bullying target for the business and develop an integrated strategy and plan to achieve this.
- Incorporate reporting and benchmarking of success into KPIs.
- Include the 'Keep It Decent' guidelines in employment contracts and on-boarding training.
- Display the pledge and guidelines in shared work spaces.
- Lead by example and make sure that everyone knows what the consequences of sexual harassment and bullying are.
- Consider awards for people who are demonstrating and adhering to the 'Keep It Decent' guidelines and pledge.
- Lead by example and make sure that everyone knows what the consequences of sexual harassment and bullying are.
- Share across your communication channels that your business has signed up to 'Keep It Decent' Guidelines.



## Man and Van

- Display the pledge and guidelines in shared work spaces, on your website.
- Let clients know you have pledged to 'Keep It Decent' guidelines.
- Talk through the guidelines and examples in a toolbox chat session
- Include the Keep It Decent guidelines in employment contracts and on-boarding training.
- Lead by example and make sure that everyone knows what the consequences of sexual harassment and bullying are.
- Nominate a dedicated 'Keep It Decent' representative and ensure all staff know who that person is and what their role is.
- Develop an up-to-date sexual harassment and bullying policy.

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