

## Tools to help 'call it out'

This section provides councils and other organisations with pointers to stimulate conversations among their workforce and communities. This information will help build capacity among all Victorians in understanding the issues and how to respond to them.

### How to "call it out"

'Call it out' is a broad term for responding in some way to behaviours that may be deemed sexist, disrespectful, abusive or constitute sexual harassment.

Inappropriate behaviour can be 'called out' by saying something or using body language to indicate disapproval in the moment. Bystanders can also say or do something later, after the incident (see 'ways to #callitout' on the next page). You should use your judgement about the best way to respond, to show that the comment or behaviour is not okay. If the behaviour is directed at a particular person, your response may be primarily to support them (see number 5 and 10 on the following page).

'Calling it out' does not mean physically intervening when you witness violence and does not include hostile or aggressive responses.

If you believe someone is in immediate danger call 000 and ask for the police. It is important that when you react to inappropriate behavior directed toward women, you do not put yourself or the person who is being targeted at risk. Before responding, you should assess safety and risk of escalation. It is also important to stay within your comfort zone and be pragmatic about your level of skill or confidence. As with any bystander intervention, your safety is paramount.

## Different types of bystander action

There are a range of ways you can respond to sexism, harassment and disrespect towards women, depending on the context and your level of confidence. These can be grouped into four categories:

- > **Diffuse** Make light-hearted comments or give disapproving looks
- > **Check in** See if the target is okay
- > **Call it out** Declare the statement or behaviour offensive and explain why it is harmful
- > **Report** Access incident reporting systems or report to management where applicable.

See VicHealth's [Take action: Empowering bystanders to act on sexist and sexually harassing behaviours](#) for more information.



# 16 ways to #callitout

What to do when you hear or see sexist, disrespectful or sexually harassing behaviour

1. Don't laugh at sexist jokes.
2. Give a disapproving look to show a behaviour or statement is not okay. Shake your head or roll your eyes.
3. Leave a pointed and uncomfortable silence.
4. Make a light-hearted comment: "What century are you living in?"
5. Check in with the person affected: "I heard what he just said – are you okay?"
6. Privately let them know the behaviour is not okay: "The joke you made in yesterday's meeting was not funny, and actually not okay."
7. Calmly disagree and state that the comment is wrong or unacceptable: "I know you probably didn't mean it, but I found what you said to be offensive."
8. Speak up and educate by explaining why you disagree: "Actually evidence shows the vast majority of women do not make up false claims of sexual assault" (you could use the Key Facts in this toolkit).
9. Challenge the logic: "That's not my experience." or "What makes you think that?"
10. Stand up for the person affected: "Michelle was saying something, and you cut her off again."
11. Make eye contact with the person affected - let them know you're an ally.
12. Show your emotion: "It actually makes me sad/uncomfortable when you say that."
13. Support others when they call it out: "I agree, that's not funny."
14. Appeal to their better self: "Come on, you're better than that."
15. Report the behaviour to management, or via incident reporting systems if available.
16. Disrupt or distract the situation to redirect focus from the incident to something else.

For more examples of how to #callitout visit:

- > [Respect Victoria Respect Women: Call It Out campaigns](#)
- > [Our Watch Doing Nothing Does Harm campaign](#)
- > [Our Watch No excuse for abuse campaign](#)
- > [Michael Flood Challenging Everyday Sexism Workshop Notes](#)

# What should be called out?

In order to call out sexism and disrespect towards women, people must first be able to recognise it. Here are a few everyday examples of sexism, disrespect and harassment that should be 'called out':

- > Using 'like a girl' as an insult: "Stop whingeing, you sound like a girl!"
- > Sexist jokes at the pub: "I'd give her an 8 out of 10!"
- > The stereotype that men and boys don't cry
- > Comments that transgender women are "not real women"
- > Sitting back while female colleagues clean the work kitchen or get the coffees
- > Stereotypes about skills: "I need a bloke's brain for this"
- > Belittling women: "Given what your husband does, do you really need to work?"
- > Comments made about a person's suitability for a role based on their gender: "I think it's weird for a guy to be a child care worker"
- > Leering or staring
- > Sharing inappropriate images with co-workers
- > Fathers being congratulated for doing basic parenting tasks: "Great job babysitting the kids!"
- > Sexism and racism disguised as a compliment: "She's pretty... for an Aboriginal girl."
- > When your mate puts his partner down
- > Cat-calling / wolf-whistling
- > Comments about women being "too emotional"
- > The stereotype that Asian women are submissive and therefore make "better wives" and "know how to look after men"
- > Sexually suggestive comments or jokes: "I know just what you need to release some stress!"
- > Leering or staring



**"come on,  
you're better  
than that"**