



CONCO>E
TŪHURA

On-site Upstanders: Building a Bystander Culture

A Framework to Eliminate Sexual Harassment & Hostile Work
Environments for Women in Construction & Infrastructure



WHY IS THIS FRAMEWORK NEEDED?

Sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2023) highlight the importance of work environments to the wider development of economies and societies. In particular, Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth focusing on ‘Sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all’(n.p.), Goal 5: Gender Equality and Goal 10: Reduced inequalities highlight the importance of safe and inclusive workplaces for economic and societal development.

Inclusive work cultures have been linked to increased productivity and organisational performance. One of the recognised barriers to achieving an inclusive work culture is a hostile work environment, which includes the presence of threatening, bullying or harassing behaviours at work (Alterman, Luckhaupt, Dahlhamer, Ward & Calvert, 2013). While these behaviours impact everyone, statistics confirm that sexual harassment (Griffiths et al, 2019) and workplace incivility (Dorrance Hall & Gettings, 2020) are more often experienced by women in general and in particular for women working in male-dominated industries and occupations (Dyer & Hurd, 2021).

Hostile work environments, including harassment and bullying, family-unfriendly work practices, and non-gender-neutral equipment, are also identified as major barriers to increasing women’s participation in male-dominated industries. Despite many campaigns to increase the diversity of the workforce, the NZ construction and infrastructure sector has seen little movement in the gender makeup of the workforce since 2015 (Waihanga Ara Rau, 2022). There are also persistent issues with sexual harassment in the sector, with latest research by the Human Rights Commission (2022) finding 30% of workers in the sector experiencing at least one sexual harassment behaviour in the past 5 years.

Some organisations are working hard to create their own policies and practices; however, due to the fragmented nature of the sector, we believe this needs a sector-wide approach to culture change.

WHAT IS IT LIKE FOR WOMEN ON SITE?

Participants in our workshops were asked this question. While participants acknowledged some progress in the industry, they identified a number of barriers and behaviours which still exist. They observed that on-site expectations and behaviour assumed workers would be male, reflecting broader societal gender norms and the industry’s historical workforce makeup.

The physical work environment, with a lack of toilets and other facilities, inflexible hours and a lack of family-friendly policies, further perpetuates traditional gender expectations. The absence of women on-site, limited career paths, and unequal training opportunities also left women feeling isolated and unsure of their career prospects.

Participants shared experiences of unconscious bias, instances of sexual harassment, hostile work environments, and negative perceptions of women on-site. This sector-wide culture was felt to be unwelcoming for women, reinforcing the perception that it’s primarily a space for men, and leaving women feeling they did not ‘fit in’. This meant women on site needed to adjust their behaviour, dress and language, leaving them feeling they were not their ‘true selves’ at work. This culture also enables sexual harassment and other hostile work environment behaviours to thrive.

Understanding these experiences helps us define the issue we need to address in this framework.

BUT ISN'T THERE WORK ALREADY HAPPENING?

Yes! Recognising the acknowledged need for greater diversity in the construction and infrastructure workforce, alongside a growing awareness of the issue of sexual harassment within the sector, various organisations have initiated practical efforts to tackle these challenges.

Some examples of this work include:

- Keep it Decent Guidelines (Waihanga Ara Rau & Hanga-Aro-Rau)
- Stand up, Step In Active Bystander Guidelines (Waihanga Ara Rau & Hanga-Aro-Rau): providing advice to employers to encourage bystander actions on-site
- BCITO have a goal to increase women in the workforce to 30%, and have a range of initiatives to encourage women into the sector
- Construction Accord (2022), who recognise that ‘The sector needs to find new ways of recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, including more women, Māori, Pasifika and people with disabilities’
- Diversity Agenda 2023-2025 (Engineering & Architecture), focused on a range of initiatives, initially focused on increasing the number of women in engineering and architecture, but now expanded to include a wide range of diversity and inclusion initiatives

SO, WHY DO WE NEED THIS FRAMEWORK?

Part of the reason this framework is needed is because there are a lot of different initiatives, with a variety of aims, being carried out by a number of organisations. While all of this existing work is needed, there is no cross-sector understanding and agreement of the nature of the problem, or a roadmap to connect these different initiatives. In addition, some organisations are also launching their own bystander initiatives; however, these tend to be larger and Tier 1 firms. While this is positive for their workers, the largest proportion of the workforce is in smaller and sub-contracting organisations. This theory of change aims to provide a high-level framework to shift the culture across the sector. The full theory of change is available at the end of this document.

Good for All Workers	Good for All Business	Good for Clients	Good for Training Providers	Good for Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased wellbeing for all workers, who benefit from a better workplace culture and safer workplace• Increased flexibility and family-friendly policies for all workers• Financial wellbeing benefits for women coming from increased retention, and progression opportunities• All workers benefit from training opportunities<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Women benefit from access to technical training, leadership training· All workers benefit from bystander training and values training• Clear career progression pathways for women leading to more women in leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased pool of prospective employees, as Construction & Infrastructure sector seen as a more attractive career prospect for all• Resources and advice provided, increased capacity on dealing with sexual harassment and encouraging bystander culture• Culture advantages from taking the workforce along with you on this bystander journey• Increased retention & productivity, your best workers stay• Better access to experts in inclusive work cultures & gendered harm• Lower risk of personal grievances, sick leave, and health & safety incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased productivity means quality product, delivered effectively and efficiently• Consistent understanding of minimum standards across large and small firms, ensuring safer worksites• Better relationships with contractors and the wider sector through establishing clear behavioural norms & expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased ability to ensure positive workplace outcomes for learners• Growth in training opportunities, both technical and culture-focused<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Bystander training· Values training· Leadership training· Technical training: increased access• Smoother path to curriculum design and implementation as the initiative is being driven from the sector• Inclusion of training providers in development of initiatives creates closer connections between providers and sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals, specifically: Goal 05: Gender Equality Goal 08:• Decent Work and Economic Growth Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities• Sector members taking new skills into their home/community relationships and settings• Sector leading the way, providing example for other sectors

Leading to sector-wide benefits: increased recruitment, retention, being sector of choice

ENABLERS OF WORKPLACE CULTURE

Our research revealed a range of factors that are either precursors to sexual harassment and hostile work environments or enable supportive, positive work cultures and bystander behaviours to thrive.

Precursors of Sexual Harassment & Hostile Work Environments	
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negative Mentoring• Accepting current behaviour, encouraging new staff to ‘fit in’ or to accept current culture• ‘Head in the Sand’• Ignoring behaviour or brushing it off rather than taking concerns seriously
Structure of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isolated work sites• Disconnection with leadership/ head office policies• Hours of work• Long hours and increased stress• Lack of facilities• Toilets, sanitary bins, PPE
Customers & Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low-cost contracts• Set the ability to spend more on facilities, or demand longer hours• Lead contractors• Responsibility for on-site behaviour not well defined• Sub-contractors are often not required to adhere to minimum requirements in training or facilities
Unclear Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different policies and requirements for each organisation• Inconsistent response to incidents across sites and organisations• Lack of agreement on common language, definition of acceptable behaviour or response• Lack of clear sexual harassment focus from H&S regulators
Individual Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of training: understanding of acceptable behaviours and what actions can be taken• New to the industry: may accept behaviour as industry norm

Enablers of Positive Culture & Bystander Actions	
Site Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking concerns seriously, acting with consistency• Recognition of skills & abilities of all workers
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing Bystander training to all on site• Bystander included in leadership training
Organisational Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Larger firms have resources to develop policies- more difficult for small firms• Focus on holistic health & safety, rather than only physical harm• Commitment from top leadership
External Influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear and consistent monitoring (WorkSafe, health & safety and human resource management)• Influence of social groups outside of work (e.g: whānau, marae, cultural groups, church)
Individual Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Length of service• Longer-serving colleagues role-modelling• Understanding of self and own values

WHAT IS THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE?



How might we measure progress?



Increased Retention



Decreased sick leave



Increased Number of Incidents Reported

STARTING THE PROCESS: 7 KEY ACTIONS

The following sets of initiatives will help the sector start the process to develop a bystander/upstander culture and eliminate sexual harassment and hostile work environments for women.

1. Create a mechanism for the sector to connect and learn together

- Come together to share success and learn together
- Bring together all current sector initiatives to align and review
- Tier 1 firms taking leadership alongside enabling small businesses and sub-contractors

2. Establish sector agreement around bystander/upstander good practice and sexual harassment

- Develop minimum standards for facilities and behaviour on site
- Create a common language for talking about sexual harassment and bystander/upstander culture

3. Work towards best-practice reporting sector-wide

- Develop agreed reporting approach sector-wide

4. Start the procurement conversation

- Initiate discussions with key clients (e.g. public sector) about minimum procurement standards, including inclusive facilities and behaviour expectations

5. Training initiatives

- Develop and implement bystander training across the sector
- Develop and implement leadership and values training for the sector

6. Bystander supporting actions

- Develop a mechanism for reporting incidents across the sector (e.g. an App)
- Develop/implement a system for on-site support for victims and bystanders (dedicated contact people)

7. Filling the gaps in our understanding

- Research on the nature of sexual harassment and hostile work environments in the sector
- Research on why men in the sector might not step in when they see undesirable behaviour, and why some do
- Research on why women leave the sector, and what would encourage them to return

STAKEHOLDER ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

An effective sector-wide approach to addressing sexual harassment and hostile work environments and creating a bystander culture requires the work of everyone in the sector. Beyond the sector, there are partners such as gendered violence and inclusive work organisations and researchers, who can help the sector understand the best approach to use for each initiative. The following are key stakeholders in the initial phases of the theory of change. These are likely to evolve as the theory of change develops, is evaluated, reviewed and progresses.

Sector Organisations

- Tier 1 firms to take a leadership role, acknowledging that they are often in the position of lead contractor, and set the conditions on many larger sites. In addition, they have a greater degree of resources and capabilities in culture change, health and safety and related areas to assist in the development of policies and practices that can be shared with smaller firms.

Workforce Development Councils

- Waihangā Ara Rau/ Hanga-Aro-Rau: Would be well positioned to take leadership in overseeing the implementation of this framework. This would help enable the alignment of other current workstreams with the intention of an all-of-sector approach.

Sector Interest and Advocacy Groups

- For example, NAWIC, Women in Trades: Are important partners in ensuring the outcomes of this project are realised, providing feedback on initiatives, and promoting this work among women working in the sector.

Public Sector Regulators:

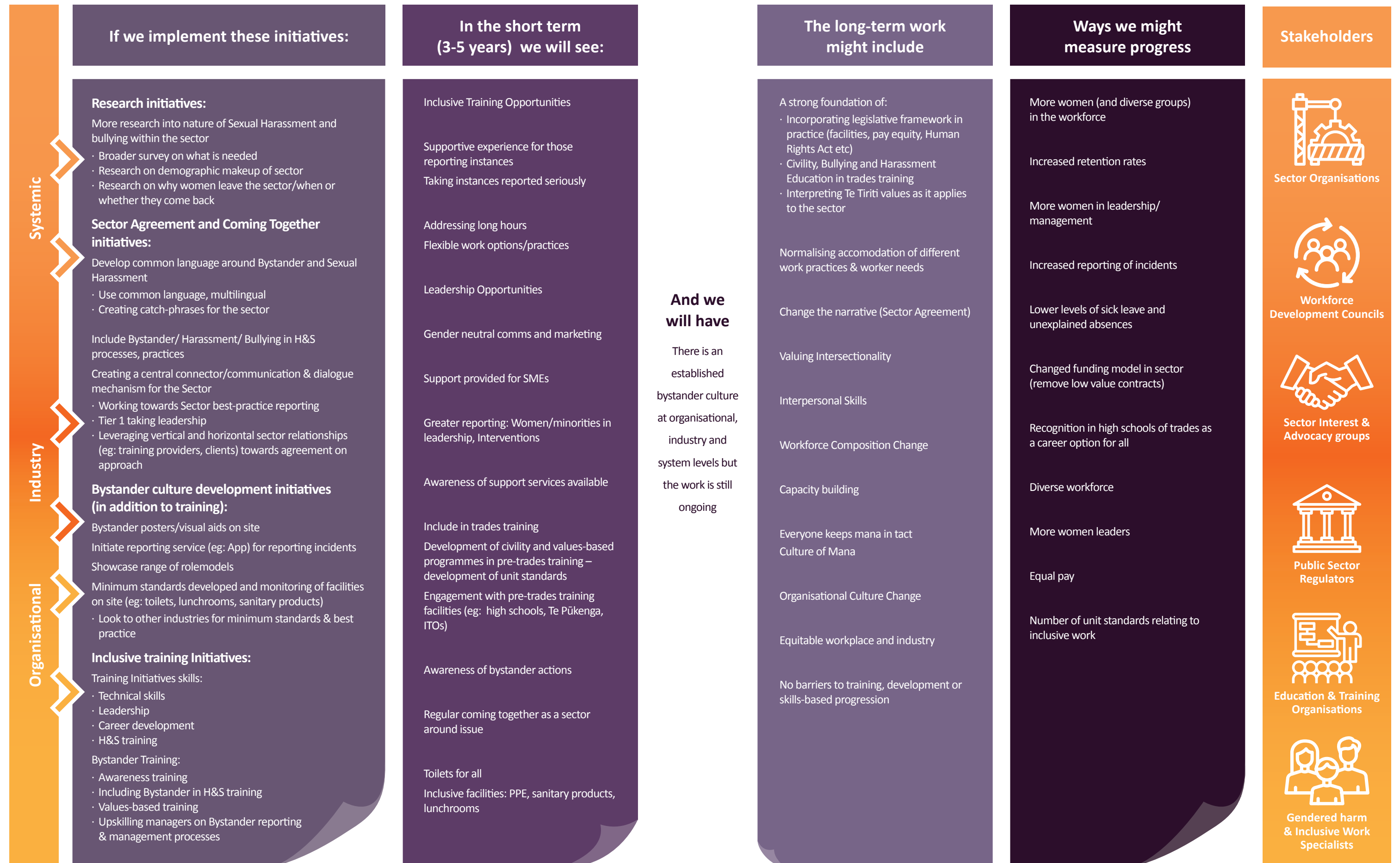
- For example, WorkSafe: Have an important role in overseeing safe workplaces, which in law includes sexual harassment and other hostile work environment behaviours.
- Human Rights Commission: Are currently the key agency that both collects data on sexual harassment, alongside their roles for investigating complaints and supporting victims.

Education & Training Organisations

- For example, Te Pūkenga, Connexis, BCITO: As key organisations who train for the sector, and oversee both off-site and on-site training, these will be critical partners as the sector looks to embed renewed expectations among incoming workers.

Gendered Harm & Inclusive Work Specialists

- For example, Rape Prevention Education, Soundcheck, National Council for Women, Researchers: Are important partners in developing appropriate initiatives (eg: bystander training) that are underpinned by best practice and research.



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