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SEXISM AND HARASSMENT STILL RIFE IN LEGAL SECTOR, NEW REPORT SHOWS

Senior Victorian legal and justice executives are meeting today to discuss a new report which shows that sexism and gender inequality continue to be major issues in the sector.

The Starts With Us discussion paper, produced by Women's Legal Service Victoria (WLSV), gathered stories from almost 300 sector professionals which show that sexual harassment and disrespect towards women is pervasive, women's career prospects are routinely stunted and victim-blaming is common.

The research findings will be examined by 70 legal and justice leaders at a forum today with the aim of implementing real change in the sector.

WLSV's Lynda Memery, one of the discussion paper's authors, said that the time is right for the sector to seriously address the gender inequality and sexism that is driving so many talented women away from the profession.

"Sexism is alive and well in the legal professional today, with our research revealing some shocking examples of harassment and discrimination," she said.

"Research participants spoke of being groped, propositioned for sex, being shown pornography and hearing demeaning jokes that belittle and objectify women.

"They also said the enduring 'boys club' in legal and justice meant women are frequently undermined, undervalued and sidelined – especially if they have children or are of 'childbearing age'.

"We need to address the everyday, entrenched sexism that underpins it all and that greatly affects women's careers, opportunities and wellbeing."

Ms Memery said the legal sector needed to be a leader on workplace gender equality.

"Our research findings, today's sector leader's forum and the ongoing work of Starts With Us are ideal opportunities for the legal and justice workforce to seriously engage with and remedy the inequitable and unjust experiences women are having in the sector," she said.



“We call on the sector to take appropriate action to address the underlying attitudes that allow gender discrimination and harassment to flourish.”

The Starts With Us research and forum are the first stages of a long-term project to eradicate sexism and gender inequality in the sector, which are known to be precursors to violence against women.

Starts With Us is supported by the Victorian Government.

The full Starts With Us discussion paper can be accessed [here](#)

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