

PLANNING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE EVENTS

How to make your event safe and inclusive for women

Thirty per cent of young women aged 15 to 19 believe they should avoid public places after dark¹, according to a 2016 national study.

The prevalence of sexual harassment in public places – be it verbal (such as ‘cat-calling’) or physical – can contribute to women feeling unsafe.

Therefore, women may not feel able to move freely in public places, and may not want to participate in activities outside their homes.

By making events feel welcoming and inclusive for everyone, people feel safer, stay longer and enjoy themselves more.

While this document mostly refers to women and girls, the principles of inclusion apply to people of all gender identities, sexual orientations, ages and cultural backgrounds. We should strive to make our events safe and inclusive for all people.

Design for participation

It takes careful planning and execution to make sure events are safe and inclusive for women.

Different criteria apply depending on the size, location and type of event – from a musical festival at a licensed venue, to a seminar at a conference centre, or a community fair in a public place.

Here’s a checklist to help you plan your event. As the checklist covers criteria relevant to a diverse range of events, some items may not be applicable to your specific event.

Logistics

- Create an official code of conduct to ensure your event and associated online spaces provide a harassment-free experience for everyone, regardless of gender and gender identity, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, or religion. Make it clear that harassment² of participants in any form is not tolerated.
- Ensure partners and sponsors conform to your policies. In particular, sponsors should not use sexual language or imagery in promotional activities or marketing material.
- Seek out speakers, panellists and performers from diverse backgrounds, and ensure at least 50 per cent are women (for suggestions, visit Victorian Women’s Trust’s Here She Is Directory).
- Provide equal payments to speakers, panellists and performers.
- Provide single-occupancy, gender-neutral bathrooms to help transgender and non-binary people feel more comfortable.
- Provide a designated and private space for mothers to breastfeed their child or express milk.
- Provide free childcare if appropriate.
- Provide a safe chill-out or first aid zone where women can relax, recover, report experiences of sexual harassment and seek medical assistance.
- Provide designated pram parking bays for family-friendly events, where possible.

- Ensure attendees have access to food and beverages that meet a range of dietary, religious and cultural needs. This includes non-alcoholic drinks.
- Create a registration form that offers the gender neutral salutation “Mx”.
- Use gender-neutral pronouns (for example: they, them, theirs) and, if using name tags, consider using pronoun stickers to help reduce instances of mis-gendering.
- If you intend to hold an open discussion, give many diverse voices (including women, people of colour, people of different ages and people with disabilities) a chance to speak and share.
- Choose photos or images that represent a diversity of people for your communications and promotional materials, and avoid using sexual language and imagery.
- Ensure pricing is not a barrier for people on low or no income. Where possible, offer subsidised or reduced fees and free or low cost food, drink and merchandise.
- Do not take pictures or recordings of any attendee unless you receive explicit permission.
- Provide opportunities for feedback about the event at the site. Include questions specifically for women to better understand their experiences.



Location

- Choose your location carefully. Consider if there is good lighting leading to and from the venue and how the surroundings may impact on perceptions of safety.
- Provide directional signage to ensure people can find their way around, including to the toilets, public transport, parking, chill out or first aid area, breastfeeding area and family-friendly area.
- Promote your anti-sexual harassment and bystander action values (see the [Victorian Government's Sexual harassment posters](#) through signage in high traffic areas).
- Ensure your events is accessible by public transport. Availability of sufficient parking near the venue is also important, particularly disabled parking.

Safety

- Make sure event and security staff are easy-to-identify by their uniforms and badges.
- Prioritise hiring female security, event management and bar staff as women usually feel more comfortable approaching female staff members if they feel threatened.
- Encourage event and security staff to actively look out for intimidating, harassing and predatory behaviour and help participants contact police, or provide escorts to ensure people reach their cars or public transport safely.

Other useful resources

- [City of Melbourne's Gender and safety audit checklist for licensed venues](#)
- [City of Melbourne's Guide to reporting sexist advertising](#)
- [Victorian Women's Trust Here She is Directory](#)
- [Victorian Government's Best practice guidelines for live music venues](#)
- [Victorian Government's Design Guidelines for Licensed Premises](#)
- [ACT Government's Women's Community Safety Audit Events checklist](#)
- [Department of Health Code of Practice for Running Safer Music Festivals and Events](#)

¹ A Right to the Night: Australian girls on their safety in public places, Plan International Australia and Our Watch, 2016 <https://www.plan.org.au/-/media/plan/documents/resources/a-right-to-the-night.pdf?la=en>

² Harassment includes offensive verbal comments related to gender and gender identity, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.