# Enabler: Building a culture of prevention

*Ambulance Victoria has committed to building a culture where prevention is the responsibility of all staff.*

## Why is this an enabler for reform?

Achieving a culture where harmful workplace conduct, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination, is prevented will help to stop harm before it occurs. This sort of culture will support implementation of Review priority recommendations, most of which relate to preventing harmful workplace conduct.

Prevention goes to the heart of what is required by the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic) [positive duty](https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/for-organisations/positive-duty/) to take reasonable and proportionate steps to eliminate harms as far as possible. Prevention is more than compliance with a legal duty. It also matters morally because everyone who comes to work should not be harmed by their workplace.

Accountability for preventing unlawful conduct lies with every single member of the organisation. Achieving organisation-wide attitudinal shift towards prevention therefore requires a shared understanding of appropriate workplace behaviours, accountability to uphold them and knowledge of the organisational processes and practices that facilitate them.

## What are the impacts of harnessing this reform enabler for implementing the Review recommendations?

Within a culture of prevention, leaders consistently model organisational values and are held accountable for unacceptable behaviour. Such a culture will help enable Ambulance Victoria to implement and embed the following priority recommendations:

* Recommendation 7: Resetting and embedding organisational values
* Recommendation 8: Encouraging a ‘speak up’ culture
* Recommendation 13: A victim-centred and fair report and complaint system
* Recommendation 14: Enhancing perceptions of independence and supporting capability for the new organisational response to reports and complaints of unlawful conduct
* Recommendation 42: Organisational healing and cultural change through reflective practice

Building a culture of prevention will provide an avenue to implementing the intended outcomes behind several of the Review priority recommendations that require developing a shared understanding of acceptable behaviour through capability and learning:

* Recommendation 33: Building knowledge, capability and accountability
* Recommendation 36: Strengthening workplace equality education and training
* Recommendation 37: Embedding sustained learning and development

Select the links above for further information on how this enabler is impacting recommendation implementation.

## What are the impacts of this reform enabler for Ambulance Victoria’s workforce?

### Building a culture of prevention will demonstrate to the workforce that Ambulance Victoria is committed to preventing harm

The Commission notes that Ambulance Victoria has taken some steps towards prevention, but during the Progress Evaluation Audit the Commission also heard workforce concerns that the organisation as a whole is not committed to changing behaviour.

If Ambulance Victoria can consistently demonstrate to the workforce that it is making meaningful change to build a culture of preventing workplace harm, this will go a long way towards rebuilding workforce morale and confidence that they will not experience or witness unlawful conduct.

### A proactive approach to safety will enable Ambulance Victoria to prevent workplace harm and help the workforce to feel safe

During the Progress Evaluation Audit, the Commission found that Ambulance Victoria takes a reactive more than a proactive approach to safety issues, including the risk of unlawful behaviour under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic). As noted in the assessment of Recommendation 6: Improving safety in isolated environments, Ambulance Victoria’s workforce has negative views and experiences around physical and psychological safety at work.

While it is understood that the type of work done by paramedics comes with physical and psychological risks, the Commission heard that many people within Ambulance Victoria consider these risks should simply be accepted as inherent to the role. Many members of the workforce also told the Commission that they are resigned to the fact that physical injury and burnout are inevitable consequences of their role.

Building a culture of prevention that takes a more proactive approach to identifying and mitigating workplace harms and safety risks will help the workforce to feel safe at work.

## What are the impacts of this reform enabler for Ambulance Victoria’s leadership?

### Increasing organisational prevention capability will increase workforce trust and confidence in senior leadership

Organisational capability is one of the 6 minimum standards identified by the Commission that organisations must meet to comply with their positive duty to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. This involves, for example, leaders being required to role model respectful behaviour and holding people to account (including themselves) for unlawful workplace behaviour in a fair, consistent and timely manner.[[1]](#footnote-1) Building this organisational prevention capability will help Ambulance Victoria to increase workforce trust and confidence in senior leadership accountability and commitment to prevention, which the Commission heard during Phase 3 of the Review is very low. This was illustrated in the workforce survey, with results where only 19% of respondents agreed that senior leaders hold themselves accountable for preventing unlawful and harmful conduct.

1. ‘Positive duty’, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission <https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/for-organisations/positive-duty/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)