

FACT SHEET

What Women Need in the Workplace



As more women join trades, construction, and energy, workplaces must go beyond just hiring them and provide real, practical support. This includes properly fitted PPE, clean facilities, respectful communication, and fair opportunities.

When these needs are acknowledged and addressed, the whole team benefits. Workplaces become safer, more productive, and more respectful. And as industries evolve, supporting women isn't just the right thing to do—it's essential to building a stronger, more sustainable future.

What Women Need in the Workplace (That Tradesmen Might Not Know)



Access to Clean, Private Facilities

Why It Matters: Having clean, private toilets with bins for menstrual products is not a luxury—it's a basic need for hygiene and dignity.

What Tradesmen Might Not Know: Some women avoid drinking water or skip meals to avoid needing facilities that aren't there or are poorly maintained.

What Good Support Looks Like:

- ◆ Clean, lockable toilets
- ◆ Bins for sanitary products inside the cubicle
- ◆ Access to hygiene supplies (pads, tampons, hand soap)
- ◆ A private space for changing if needed



Clear, Respectful Communication

Why It Matters: Women thrive in workplaces where communication is direct, respectful, and free from assumptions or sarcasm.

What Tradesmen Might Not Know: What might be seen as “just banter” can come across as dismissive, intimidating, or alienating. It may stop women from asking questions or speaking up.

What Good Support Looks Like:

- ◆ Let everyone finish speaking without interruption
- ◆ Avoid jokes about gender or appearances
- ◆ Check in by asking, “Does that make sense?” or “Any thoughts on that?”
- ◆ Back someone up if their point is dismissed or ignored



Properly Fitted PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)

Why It Matters: Most PPE is designed for men. Poor fit means poor safety and discomfort.

What Tradesmen Might Not Know: Women sometimes wear unsafe gear because there aren't proper sizes available.

What Good Support Looks Like:

- ◆ Make sure PPE suppliers include women's sizes
- ◆ Check in: "Is your gear fitting properly?"



Fair Task Allocation

Why It Matters: Assigning women only the "easier" or lighter tasks may seem helpful but can feel like exclusion.

What Tradesmen Might Not Know: Many women want to learn all tasks—including heavy or challenging ones.

What Good Support Looks Like:

- ◆ Offer equal opportunities for all tasks
- ◆ Ask what tasks they're confident in or would like to learn



Flexibility for Care Responsibilities

Why It Matters: Many women balance caregiving with work, whether it's kids, family, or medical needs.

What Tradesmen Might Not Know: Needing to leave early or adjust start times doesn't mean a lack of commitment. It means managing life.

What Good Support Looks Like:

- ◆ Be open to flexible hours or adjusted shifts when possible
- ◆ Have honest conversations about availability without judgment



Psychological Safety

Why It Matters: Everyone should feel safe to speak up, ask questions, or report issues without fear of being mocked or dismissed.

What Tradesmen Might Not Know: Interruptions, jokes, or dismissive comments can shut someone down completely.

What Good Support Looks Like:

- ◆ Encourage open conversations
- ◆ Shut down disrespectful comments or jokes
- ◆ Say things like "There are no stupid questions here."



Seeing Women in Leadership and Being Supported

Why It Matters: Seeing women in leadership roles proves that growth and success are possible for everyone.

What Tradesmen Might Not Know: One supportive boss, co-worker, or mentor can make the difference between someone staying in the job or walking away.

What Good Support Looks Like:

- ◆ Encourage women to take on leadership roles
- ◆ Offer mentorship or support for growth

Pregnancy Awareness on Worksites

→ *Respectful Conversations About Pregnancy*



- **Never ask**, “Are you pregnant?” Let workers share when they’re ready.
- **Create a safe space** by saying things like, “If you ever need any adjustments at work, feel free to let me know. We’ll support you.”
- **Encourage honesty** by explaining that sharing a pregnancy early helps ensure a safer working environment.
- **Keep it private**. If someone shares their pregnancy, don’t tell others unless it’s necessary for health and safety—and only with her permission.



If you’re unsure of what to do, refer to your workplace’s **Parental and Pregnancy Policy** for clear steps on support, leave options, and safety requirements.

→ *If a Worker Shares They Are Pregnant*

Say: “Thanks for letting me know. How can we support you?”

Respect privacy: Only share with those who need to know (e.g., for safety or task adjustments).

Adjust tasks to avoid:

- Heavy lifting
- Prolonged standing
- Extreme heat or chemical exposure

Check PPE: Make sure it still fits comfortably (there are maternity options available).

Offer flexibility: Start times, more breaks, or time off for appointments.

Talk about work adjustments and any future return-to-work plans.

→ *Worksite Facilities Support During Pregnancy*

- Clean, private restrooms with bins
- A private space to sit or rest if needed
- Easy access to drinking water and shaded areas

Understanding Hormones and the Menstrual Cycle at Work

You might not see it, but hormonal changes and periods can affect how some of your female teammates feel and work. It's not a problem—it's just part of life. And in male-dominated workplaces, simply understanding this can go a long way in making everyone feel supported.

What You Might Notice:

- Someone's quieter or more irritable than usual
- They ask for a break or seem in pain
- They take more bathroom breaks
- They ask to swap tasks or work more slowly

What's Going On:

Things like cramps, headaches, mood swings, or fatigue are common. It doesn't mean they're less capable. It just means they might need a bit of consideration that day.

What You Can Do:

- ✓ **Be respectful.** Don't make jokes or call someone "moody" or "too sensitive."
- ✓ **Don't take it personally.** If someone seems off, it might have nothing to do with you.
- ✓ **Be decent.** If a co-worker asks for a swap or a break, just be supportive.
- ✓ **Keep supplies stocked.** If you're in charge of facilities, make sure there are clean bathrooms with pads or tampons available—it matters.

Tips for Tradesmen

- Listen. Don't assume—ask what's needed.
- Support. Back up your teammates. Speak up when things don't seem fair.
- Check In. *"Is there anything we can improve to make things work better for you?"*
- Remember: Inclusion doesn't mean less opportunity for men. It means more respect and fairness for everyone.



Helpful Resources

- Fair Work Ombudsman – Pregnancy and Work Rights: www.fairwork.gov.au
- Safe Work Australia – Managing Risks in Pregnancy: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au
- Pregnancy, Birth and Baby (Advice & Support): www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au
- Lifeline (Mental Health Support): 13 11 14 or www.lifeline.org.au