**Sample leadership statement**

*The following leadership statement is adapted from a version shared by one of the Champions of Change Coalition Members. It is provided as an example structure that leaders could adapt or customise for their organisation. For a leadership statement to have authenticity and impact, there are key message elements that must personally come from leaders. Key message elements are shown in red.*

It is important that we create a workplace environment that is safe, respectful and inclusive for all who work here. (Clear statement of responsibility)

This is personally important to our Board, leadership team and myself. (Personal leadership and commitment)

It is consistent with the values of our organisation. (Link to organisational values)

It is also fundamental to our purpose as an organisation. As an emergency service organisation, we are charged with protecting the communities we serve. It is essential that that same commitment to health, safety and well-being extends to all our staff. (Link to organisational purpose)

I have learned recently, that for many of our colleagues, to varying degrees, this is not a physically or psychologically safe organisation. Specifically, this has been the situation for many of our women colleagues which I have learned about from individual reports; from a series of 'listen and learn' sessions with women members of staff; and from a preliminary assessment report conducted by an independent consultant. (Personal engagement from leaders on the issue)

From these sources a consistent picture emerged, and it is evident that for many women, working here can be both confronting and disturbing. We were provided with examples of unprofessional and inappropriate behaviours, where important professional boundaries were crossed. These examples ranged from jokes of a sexual nature through to incidents that could easily be interpreted as constituting serious workplace misconduct. (Description on the range of issues)

Context around these issues is really important. While these incidents were perpetrated predominantly by males, this is not representative of males in our organisation generally. There was a consistent backstory of how women valued their male colleagues and enjoyed working with them. (Acknowledge context)

It is also fair to say that on many of the occasions that were identified, there may not have been any serious intent to cause offence. These issues often appear to arise as a product of a mainly male-dominated workplace that existed 20 to 30 years ago, at a time when these behaviours were tolerated, especially in workplaces modelled on old systems of work. It is, however, important to note, that although these behaviours may have been tolerated at that time, they were neither legal nor acceptable. And regardless of whether or not there is an intent to cause offence, it is still inappropriate behaviour. (Link to gender inequality in the workplace and new employee, organisation and community expectations and standards on the issues)

We need to be mindful of others’ feelings, and to be prepared to speak up, not only when we may be offended ourselves, but when we feel that someone else may be uncomfortable. For those of us who have worked here for a long time, it is too easy to overlook how difficult it may be for a newer member of staff to feel that they can speak up themselves. (Reinforce expectations of employees to speak up when they see the behaviour)

I believe that all of us know inherently what constitutes professional and appropriate conversation and behaviour. It is an integral, critical component of being competent in our roles, including knowing how to speak respectfully and courteously to a wide variety of people, in many diverse situations. We do this every day representing our organisation. It is not difficult to translate this to interactions with our colleagues. (Reinforce expectations for all employees to treat each other with dignity and respect as a mark of professionalism)

It is important to remember that this is a good place to work, and is an organisation that has much to be proud of. However, these issues demonstrate that we have a way to go and that there is scope for improvement. (Acknowledge there is work to be done and change is required)

And there needs to be a clear understanding that inappropriate workplace behaviours will not be tolerated into the future. (Affirm zero tolerance approach)

I acknowledge there are sensitivities around these issues for many people. We have our Contact Officers, Employee Assistance Program, line managers and network to provide guidance and support as necessary. (Highlight referral pathways)

And as always, I am happy to discuss this further with any of you, in whatever manner you feel most comfortable with. (Personal commitment)

Best wishes