

Kate Jenkins AO

Chair, Australian Sports Commission, President, Australian Red Cross, Leadership Adviser & Keynote Speaker

A nationally respected leader, lawyer and change-maker with over 30 years of experience driving cultural reform and advancing diversity, inclusion, and performance across Australia's most influential sectors—including workplaces, sport, the arts, education, parliament, and national security.

Kate Jenkins AO is currently Chair of the Australian Sports Commission, President of the Australian Red Cross, and Chair of the Creative Workplaces Council. She is a highly sought-after keynote speaker, leadership coach and consultant to boards, executives and organisations committed to meaningful transformation.



From 2016 to 2023, Kate served as Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, where she led two of the most influential national inquiries of recent decades:

- Respect@Work: the landmark national inquiry into sexual harassment in Australian workplaces
- Set the Standard: the independent review into workplace culture in Commonwealth Parliament

These reforms contributed to the introduction of new positive duty laws in Australia and reshaped national approaches to respectful and inclusive work environments.

Before her appointment to the Commission, Kate served as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner and spent two decades as a leading employment lawyer and equity partner at Herbert Smith Freehills.

She has also held board roles with Berry Street Victoria, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Play by the Rules, and the Carlton Football Club, reflecting her broad impact across community, cultural and sporting sectors.

Kate brings unmatched insight, integrity and strategic leadership to every role she takes on—and remains a passionate advocate for fair, safe, and high-performing environments for all Australians.

Topics

Respect@Work: safe, respectful, diverse and inclusive workplaces

Implementing actions to ensure compliance with the new positive duty to prevent sexual harassment and sex discrimination under the Sex Discrimination Act (enforcement commences December 2023).

Kate is most well known for her world first National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian workplaces, which was Australia's answer to the global #MeToo conversation. Kate's Respect@Work report set out the roadmap to eliminate sexual harassment in Australian workplaces, which has drawn global interest. Respect@Work was accepted by government, leading to extensive legislative, policy and workplace reform. As the author of these significant reforms, Kate can share her unique insight into how the new laws will impact workplaces, what needs to be done to meet the new positive duty on employers and why she is confident change will happen.

Key takeaways:

- Contemporary understanding of the nature, prevalence, causes, reporting and employer action on sexual harassment
- Compliance actions for the positive duty under the Sex Discrimination Act
- How creating safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces contributes to better performance

Gender equality in Australia - where we are, where we've been, where we're going

Driving gender equality, understanding what Australia has achieved and what needs to change, including on violence against women, women's economic security, diversity in leadership and political empowerment. Everyone has a role to play.

Kate is one of Australia's foremost experts on the gender equality, having advised governments, business and the community sector on the law and on both the challenges and the opportunities to advance the rights of women and gender diverse people. Kate has focused her work in particular on:

- the challenges facing women in achieve economic security and equality, including equal pay, superannuation, childcare, parental leave, flexible work, gender segregated industries and discrimination;
- diversity in leadership and political empowerment; and
- gender-based violence, including domestic, family and sexual violence, online violence and abuse, and sexual harassment.

As Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate travelled globally representing Australia, sharing our progress on gender equality and learning from others. With deep expertise, Kate is a trusted adviser on what is needed - from government, the private sector, civil society and the community - to achieve gender equality.

Navigating complexity and driving change in workplaces

Steps to achieve change and drive high performance in complex environments, including sport, parliament, courts, security, mining, and how those principles can apply in any workplace.

Kate's work has also left a legacy of lasting change. Kate's independent reviews and reports across a range of sectors have resulted in recommendations for reform that have been consistently accepted and implemented, with lessons for others. Kate's work includes the following sectors:

- **Parliament:** (*Set the Standard:* Independent review of sexual harassment, sexual assault and bullying in the Federal Parliament);
- **Sport:** (*Change the Routine:* Independent review of Gymnastic in Australia; also work in Netball, Golf, Australian Rules, Cricket, Football, Play by the Rules);
- **Universities:** (*Change the Course:* a survey of sexual harassment and sexual assault experienced by students in all 39 Australian Universities);
- **Corporate sector:** (*Equality Across the Board:* a survey of the ASX200 on their governance of sexual harassment; work in law, mining, retail and hospitality);
- **Security:** (Independent Review of Victoria Police; partnerships with Defence, Australian Federal Police and the Australian Border Force).

Key takeaways:

- A practical understanding of cultural reform – how to achieve change in complex or any environments
- Industry and sector specific examples of reform – failures and success

Lessons in leadership

Kate's career and personal journey, including what she's learnt about leadership, working well with others, career choices, managing a busy home life, surviving regular travel, and how being a woman has impacted it all.

Growing up on an orchard, Kate was part of the first generation in her family to go to University. Kate's career path has unfolded rather than been planned, with voluntary roles on boards of Berry Street Victoria, Heide Museum of Modern Art and the Carlton Football Club all resulting from her openness to new opportunities and commitment to her passions. As a result, Kate has worked and held leadership roles in business, not for profit and the public sector, giving her extensive leadership experience and a unique passion for enhancing cross sector understanding.

Kate is happy to share the challenges and joys of a performing well in a complex role and leading high performing teams even from COVID lockdown. Kate combines work with a busy family life shared with her American husband Ken, three adult stepchildren, two teenage children, two happy healthy Labradors and a new grandbaby.

Key take aways

- Career, life and leadership lessons

Inclusion and equality in sport

The vast reach of sport – from grass roots to elite level – from participants to officials, volunteers, supporters and beyond – makes it one of the most impactful settings for change. This is why Kate has worked extensively across the full spectrum of sport to promote safe fair and inclusive sport and promote gender equality.

Kate's work includes an independent review of gymnastics, chairing Play by the Rules, human rights risk assessment for the FIFA 2023 Women's World Cup, guidelines on improving gender equality in golf, guidelines on inclusion of trans and gender diverse people in sport, as well as work with netball, cricket, tennis, football, AFL.

Key takeaways:

- An understanding of sport and human rights
- Why safe and inclusive sport is an impactful setting for change
- The barriers and opportunities to equality and safety in sport
- Lessons for reform in the unique environment of sport
- Lessons from sport for other sectors

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