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The Advertising Council on sexual harassment and bullying

By [AdNews](#) | 7 July 2022

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The Advertising Council Australia (ACA) says the only way to prevent sexual harassment and bullying is to create an industry culture that does not tolerate it.

The issue has attracted strong comment after a pitch consultant, TrinityP3, announced plans to insist that agencies in pitches attest to the policies and programs workplace bullying, harassment and assault they have in place.

In a statement, the Advertising Council Australia said: "We recognise that over the past few years there has been considerable media coverage on the significant impact that sexual harassment, bullying and assault have on individuals, their friends, families and communities.

"While this behaviour can occur in any industry and many of our members have strong frameworks and processes in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their staff, ACA recognises the need to not only lead by example, but support the industry to do better every day."

The ACA launched Create Space in November 2021. More than 2,600 people in the industry responded to the inaugural census.

On July 14, ACA will release the [Create Space Report & Action Plan](#) that will reveal the findings of the census as well as three immediate actions the industry can take to address key issues of inequality, exclusion and underrepresentation, including creating safer workplaces.

While the action plan is designed to support all marginalised groups, the first urgent call to action is to ensure that work is a safe space for female talent and those identifying as female, as a variety of everyday demeaning behaviours or microaggressions are undermining their long-term retention and progression into senior leadership.

Critically, the only thing that will prevent sexual harassment and bullying is an industry culture that simply does not tolerate it. To accelerate this shift in standards and behaviour, we need long-term, multifaceted strategies grounded in data and which engage agency leadership, middle management, clients and the broader advertising ecosystem.

ACA: "We encourage everyone to join us on July 14 to hear the results of the Create Space Census and how you can focus your DE&I efforts to drive real change. Register for the online event [here](#)."

Darren Woolley, CEO, TrinityP3, says he welcomes any initiative aimed at reducing the incidence of workplace bullying, harassment and assault and most importantly creating a safer industry for all.

"This was the suggested solution we presented to the ACA and other industry bodies back in March this year - where we proposed extending existing third party frameworks (which many agencies already have) and simply suggested they be extended to all their members," he says.

"It was not a mandate, as some have suggested, and we have remained open to other proposals although to date none has been forthcoming beyond these ACA diversity initiatives, which frankly while important risk conflating two separate issues.

"We believe great education and information is also an important part of the solution and we wait with interest to see the full details of this proposal from the ACA on July 14.

"But in the meantime, we continue to be concerned that the focus of the ACA Create Space while addressing the need for increased diversity, within the industry, does little to ensure diverse new entrants into agency workplaces can be guaranteed a safe environment.

"We are at risk of perpetuating a cycle which could only exacerbate our industry's ongoing challenges with diversity if we drive new entrants into agencies while ignore ongoing culture challenges only to see them churn."

TrinityP3 in March we put to industry bodies -- ACA, Independent Media Agencies of Australia (IMAA) -- for the need for an independent reporting process to allow transparency into the ongoing issues and allow this to be monitored to ensure the safety of all employees.

Woolley: "In the rejection of this suggestion by the industry bodies, we have been forced to resort to the statutory declarations we are asking agencies to sign when participating in a



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pitch we are managing on behalf of our clients.

"While this is not the perfect solution, we are open to a better alternative that allows advertisers to have a level of confidence when appointing agencies that they are not tacitly supporting this reprehensible behaviour.

"If a better solution to meet this requirement is proposed, TrinityP3 would be fully supportive."

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