



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**



The big picture

We spend a large portion of our life at work. So it's not surprising that the quality of relationships with colleagues and clients is important both to our wellbeing and our sense of connection.

Why we need a positive work environment toolkit?

When we feel positive about work we can be our most productive and innovative. We can concentrate on the work at hand; not be distracted by minor irritations and shortcomings in the workplace.

This toolkit provides a quick check of your workplace from three perspectives; organisational, management and individual. It then gives practical tips on how you can improve your workplace by changing ten strategic and operational aspects of work. These range from leadership to performance management.

We have all heard of cases where an organisation has good employment policies but they are unsupported by managers and not taken up by employees so have little practical effect on the workplace. However we also know of excellent managers who encourage their staff to work to the best of their ability despite having fairly standard employment practices. And we also know of individuals who work collaboratively in the best interests of the organisation even though there are daily pressures. This is why it is important to look at the workplace from all three perspectives; organisational, management and individual.

This toolkit is based on research undertaken both here in the Victorian public sector as well as internationally¹. It provides a strong basis on which to act.

What is a positive work environment?

A positive work environment is productive, rewarding, enjoyable and healthy for everyone concerned. By everyone we mean managers, employees and clients.

The most successful workplaces are those in which everyone works well together to create a positive work environment. There is recognition that:

- our beliefs and behaviours can affect others
- building our own and others' strengths and abilities is the right focus
- each individual is unique and has the right to be treated with dignity and respect; and a person's motivation for being in a workplace can influence their expectations of it.

A positive work environment is characterised by:

- a high degree of trust and respect between all levels of staff
- a climate in which colleagues feel valued, and have a strong sense of loyalty to the organisation
- high quality leadership and management
- open discussion that leads to resolution of conflict
- a measure of self-determination over how work is undertaken
- a culture where diversity is respected and valued
- a lack of exclusive 'clubs' and cliques
- opportunities for personal development and career progression
- a high level of creativity and job satisfaction, arising from teamwork and cooperation.

However a positive work environment does not mean that no one ever leaves. Career advancement and change of role are signs of a work environment that encourages growth.