



Sexual Harassment at Work.

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& may not be relevant to your particular
matter. This toolkit should not be taken as
legal advice.*



**WORKING
WOMEN'S
CENTRE**

Sexual Harassment at Work.

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What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual behaviour where the victim feels offended, intimidated or humiliated, and it is reasonable in the circumstances to feel that way.

It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or friendship. If there is consent, it is not sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is against the law.

You do not have to put up with it.

Sexual harassment can take many forms:

- Deliberate verbal comments of a sexual nature, suggestive remarks, ridicule and offensive jokes.
- Physical contact such as touching, pinching, patting, hugging and brushing against another person's body.
- A display of offensive or erotic pictures. Sexual teasing, practical jokes, sexual name-calling or 'stirring'.
- Sexually suggestive looks or gestures such as leering, ogling or staring.
- Unwanted requests of a sexual nature.
- Continuous requests or pressure to develop a relationship.
- Persistent questions or comments about a person's private life.
- Considering a person's physical attributes rather than their skill or experience.
- Sexually based emails and 'sms' messages, this would also include messages with sexual innuendos.

Can sexual harassment be a criminal offence?

Forms of sexual harassment which may constitute criminal offences include:

- physically molesting a person
- indecent exposure
- obscene communications (telephone calls, faxes, letters, computer messages)
- sexual assault
- stalking

These actions can be reported to the police.

What are the effects of sexual harassment?

- loss of sleep, confidence, job satisfaction, promotion and other work entitlements
- lowered job performance and or job insecurity
- inability to concentrate
- ill health
- an inability to relax
- difficulty coping with everyday tasks

Informal ways of dealing with harassment:

- If possible, confront the harasser directly. You can have a support person with you while you do this. This can be effective if you feel safe to do so.
- Report incidents to a sexual harassment contact person in your workplace and discuss ways of informally resolving situations.
- Talk to your co-workers, especially women who may have suffered harassment and will support your complaint.
- Keep clear notes (preferably diary notes) if you experience incidents of harassment or harassment is reported to you. Document dates, places, times, who was there and what was said. Any records of incidents should be kept safely.

Formal ways of dealing with harassment:

- If appropriate, and if there is one, take a look at your workplace policy. Follow procedures if you feel safe to do so.
- If you work under an award or enterprise agreement, you should follow the grievance procedure in your award or agreement.
- If you are a member of a union, you can have a union representative advocate on your behalf.
- You can make a complaint to the Equal Opportunity Commission under the State Act or the Australian Human Rights Commission under the Federal Sex Discrimination Act. Your Union or the Working Women's Centre can assist with this.

Useful tips to consider if you are being sexually harassed in your workplace:

- Tell a co-worker that you trust to keep an eye out for you.
- Make sure you have made it clear to them how this is affecting you and how you think you may want to handle the situation.
- Try to minimise situations where you are left alone with the offender.
- Report it to your doctor if the harassment has begun to affect your health and well-being.

How can the Working Women's Centre Help?

We can:

- Provide advice and information about sexual harassment
- Inform you of the complaint procedure
- Help you make a complaint
- Advocate on your behalf up to and including conciliation

Where else can I go for help?

Other organisations that may be able to help include your union, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunity Commission.

If you are not already a member of a union, ring SA Unions on (08) 8279 2222 to find out which union to join.

Australian Human Rights Commission Phone: 1300 369 711

www.humanrights.gov.au

Equal Opportunity Commission Phone: (08) 8207 1977

www.eoc.sa.gov.au

Making a Sexual Harassment complaint is a serious matter.



P: (08) 8410 6499
E: www.wwc.org.au

Free Call: 1800 652 697
wwcsa.org.au

Other service providers

Yarrow Place

Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service is a service for anyone who has been sexually assaulted. Services include:

- 24 Hour Crisis Response Service for recent sexual assault—this includes support from a social worker, medical care by a doctor or nurse, and collection of forensic evidence for people who are considering legal action.
- Professional counselling and advocacy for recent and past sexual assault clients as well as their support people.

Phone: (08) 8226 8777

(Toll free) 1800 817 421

Uniting SA

Sexual Abuse & Sexual Assault Counselling for young people.

You can access this service if you are between the ages of 12 and 25, and homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Phone: (08) 8202 5060

1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT is a national 24 hour online and telephone service offering counselling and support to anyone experiencing domestic and family violence and/or sexual assault and their family and friends.

Freecall 1800 737 732 (24 hours)

If your life or someone else's life is in immediate danger, phone 000 (triple zero).