

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
CONTACT:**

G.V. Centre Against Sexual Assault

130 Nixon Street,
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Commissioner for Equal Opportunity

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**Sexual
Harassment**

**Information
for
Workplaces
&
Educational
Institutions**

**Goulburn Valley Centre
Against Sexual Assault**

130 Nixon Street Shepparton Vic 3630
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WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sexual harassment is persistent behaviour of a sexual nature which is unwanted, and which may reasonably be expected to cause the victim to feel humiliated and/or intimidated.

Sexual harassment is any behaviour which can be personally offensive, which can:

- erode individual rights.
- debilitate morale.
- interfere with the effectiveness and learning ability of its victims.
- lead to increased absenteeism due to stress, accidents, resignations and reduced career prospects.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT CAN CONSIST OF SOME OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Sexual jokes.
- Questioning about aspects of a person's sexual life.
- Repeated pressure for dates.
- Unnecessary familiarity.
- Offensive telephone calls, photographs, reading matter or objects.
- Lewd sexually suggestive comments about physical appearance.
- Unwanted leering, touching, rubbing/brushing against a person.
- Requests for sexual favours.
- Explicit sexual violence.

WHO GETS HARASSED?

Anyone can be sexually harassed, however it is more likely to happen to women than men.

LEGISLATION

The Victorian Equal Opportunity Act, and the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act are the two main pieces of legislation that relate to sexual harassment. These Acts legislate that employers are responsible for their own conduct and that of the people who work for them. Educational institutions also have a responsibility for the conduct of the people who attend that institution.

EMPLOYERS & EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBILITIES

Employers and educational institutions may be held legally responsible if sexual harassment occurs in the workplace or learning environment, unless all reasonable steps have been taken to prevent it.

Employment

Sexual harassment is unlawful. It is unlawful for an employer or supervisor knowingly to permit you to be sexually harassed by a fellow worker.

Education

It is unlawful for a person who is a staff member of an educational institution to sexually harass a person who is a student at that institution or is seeking admission as a student. The educational institution also has a responsibility to address issues of students sexually harassing other students.

Employers and educational institutions should have clear policy statements of equal opportunity and anti-harassment, as well as sound procedures in place to deal with complaints when they arise.

IF YOU ARE SEXUALLY HARASSED

- Tell the person/s harassing you that their behaviour is unacceptable. This may be done by telling the person face to face, writing to them, advising them that you will make a complaint if the person does not stop.
- Discuss the harassment with your relevant EEO Officer/school teacher.
- Keep a record of the harassment and what you do in order to stop it. If you have written a letter to the harasser, keep a copy of it. If you have spoken to the person or anyone else at work about it, keep a note of that, too.
- Contact the Goulburn Valley Centre Against Sexual Assault and/or the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity for advice.
- Don't let ridicule or disbelief stop you making your objections.

WHAT C.A.S.A. OFFERS

C.A.S.A. provides the following in relation to sexual harassment:

- Support and counselling for those who have experienced sexual harassment, including information regarding the options which may be available.
- Workplace seminars, student and professional education sessions.
- Consultations and assistance with policy development for employers and school boards.
- General information and resources about sexual harassment.