

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1. All teachers have a right to a working environment where they are treated fairly and with respect. All forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, are unacceptable. Sexual harassment is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act and is a serious industrial issue. Sexual harassment can lead to intolerable work situations, feelings of insecurity and loss of self esteem that can result in actual or potential disadvantage to teachers in their general operation and in their efforts to gain promotion or transfer. It can also result in an environment where people other than the victim may suffer.
2. Definition:
Sexual harassment is unwanted, unsolicited and unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature and may be an isolated incident or a series of incidents.
3. Sexual harassment is not confined to any gender or sexuality but usually is against women.
4. Sexual harassment includes a wide range of verbal and physical behaviour that causes another person distress. It includes:
 - (a) behaviour which may be acceptable or even welcome in another context, eg between friends in a social context but which is inappropriate at work.
 - (b) coercive sexual behaviour that controls, influences or affects the career or job of others in the workplace.
 - (c) offensive behaviour or humiliation on the basis of another person's sex or sexuality.
5. Some examples of sexual harassment in the workplace include:
 - personally offensive verbal comments.
 - sexual or smutty jokes
 - repeated comments about a person's alleged sexual activities or private life.
 - persistent unwelcome social invitations or telephone calls from workmates at work or at home.
 - being singled out for particular attention (eg in staff meetings).
 - being discouraged from applying for promotion or attending inservice courses on the grounds of gender.
 - obscene telephone calls.
 - offensive hand or body gestures.
 - physical contact such as patting, pinching, touching or putting an arm around another person's body at work.
 - provocative posters with a sexual connotation.
 - sexual assault and rape.
6. Sexual harassment can be extremely subtle or completely overt. Behaviour can be seen by different individuals in different ways - what is seen as harmless by one person can be extremely offensive to others. Members need to consider carefully the effect of their behaviour on others. As our employing bodies, DET and the CIT have a clear responsibility to prevent sexual harassment. If sexual harassment occurs, they have a legal responsibility under the Sex Discrimination Act to investigate complaints, ensure that all staff know that complaints will be treated promptly and sympathetically and that complainants and witnesses will be protected against victimisation.
7. The AEU rejects:
 - [a] any approach to addressing sexual harassment in educational settings and associated training, which removes sexual harassment from a gender equity context based on the construction of gender;
 - [b] any proposal which seeks to amalgamate racial or sexual harassment into a general harassment policy;
 - [c] any proposal in relation to Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy and Guidelines which do not specifically address homophobia.
8. If you are a victim of sexual harassment:
 - Talk the situation over with a friend.
 - Talk to a Staff Equity Contact Officer.
 - DET employees can contact the Equity and Diversity Coordinator, Employee Relations on 62059149 and/or read the DET Grievance Policy.
 - CIT employees can contact the Human Resources Unit of CIT and/or read the CIT Equity and Diversity Plan.
 - Tell the person whose behaviour you find unacceptable that it is offensive to you. You should do this in the company of a friend or a member of the Sub-Branch Executive.
 - If the above measures do not end the harassment you should consider following the formal grievance procedures in your workplace.
 - If you need help or advice, contact the AEU Assistant to the Secretary (Professional) at the Union office on 6272-7900.