

Sexuality and gender based bullying in schools

An equal opportunity fact sheet for parents/care givers

What is sexuality and gender based bullying?

Everyone knows about bullying in schools. But what if the bullying behaviour is sexual in nature?

All schools have a duty of care to their students and bullying is not tolerated.

But does this zero tolerance extend to bullying behaviour that is sexual in nature, and does it apply to sexuality and gender diverse students at your child's school?

Sexuality and gender based bullying can be similar to sexual harassment or sexual orientation discrimination.

It can be suggestive comments or jokes, insults or taunts, pictures, emails or texts sent by the bully and intrusive questions about a student's private life.

It can even be use of language such as another student saying, "that's so gay".

Is it against the law?

Yes sexuality and gender based bullying can be against the law.

If the bullying behaviour is sexual in nature it can be sexual harassment.

Just as it can be sexual orientation discrimination if a student has been treated less favourably by staff or students because of their sexuality, their perceived sexuality or the sexuality of their family or friends.



"It can be really hard to be out at school. When my girlfriend and I were bullied, it helped to talk about it with my mum and teachers." Alex

What can I do about it?

Speak to a school staff member

Every school has an anti-bullying policy and procedure that may include gender and sexuality diverse bullying, so make sure you ask the principal or staff about the school's complaint procedure, this way you can bring the bullying behaviour to the attention of the school which has the responsibility to make sure the behaviour doesn't continue.

"As a parent of a lovely daughter who is also in a committed lesbian relationship I know just how special that relationship is to my daughter and myself. I would urge all parents to support their gay children."

John Wilson

Lodge a complaint with the EOC

If your child or you feel you have been harassed or discriminated against you can lodge a complaint to the EOC or the Australian Human Rights Commission.

"Everyone has the right to be educated in a safe environment free from discrimination, harassment and bullying."

**WA Equal Opportunity Commissioner
Yvonne Henderson.**

Where can I go for help?

The staff at your child's school

Approach a staff member you can trust.

Freedom Centre

www.Freedom.org.au

info@freedom.org.au

PH:(08)9228 0354

AIDS Council PH:(08)9482 0000

Equal Opportunity Commission

www.eoc.wa.gov.au

eoc@eoc.wa.gov.au

PH:(08)9216 3900

TTY:(08)9216 3936/ Toll Free:1800 198 149

Australian Human Rights Commission

www.hreoc.gov.au

complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au

Telephone: (02) 9284 9600

Complaints Infoline: 1300 656 419

Parents, Family & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG)

pflagwa@hotmail.com

Helpline (08)9228 1005

WA Gender Project

info@wagenderproject.org

www.wagenderproject.org

Myth Busting!

MYTH: Homosexuality can be changed

FACT: Psychologists agree that trying to change a person's sexuality is harmful. People cannot be 'cured' from being gay just as they cannot be 'recruited' to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.

MYTH: Gay men & lesbians don't have long-term relationships.

FACT: Gay, lesbian and bisexual people can be in long term relationships, be a member of a loving family and a part of the wider community.

MYTH: Bisexuals just can't make up their mind.

FACT: The point is they have! Sexuality is a range between exclusively gay and exclusively heterosexual, and many people are naturally in between. Being bisexual doesn't mean you cannot be

in a committed relationship with one person either!

MYTH: Trans people are confused about their gender.

FACT: Trans people feel very sure about what gender they are. If they weren't, they wouldn't risk exposure to bullying to live as that gender.

MYTH: If a person is with another person of the same sex they must be gay.

FACT: Sexuality can be fluid and some people experiment with their sexuality, this does not mean they are necessarily gay.

MYTH: All gay men are 'flaming' or effeminate and all lesbians are butch.

FACT: Lesbians and gay men have the same range of gender expression as heterosexual people.

Glossary of Terms

gender - The sense of self associated with cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity.

sexuality - Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction.

sexually - Sexual in nature.

diversity - State of being diverse or different.

sexual orientation - A person's sexual identity in relation to the gender to which they are attracted.

trans - An umbrella term including transsexual and transgender.

transgender - A term used to describe a broad

range of gender identities and/or behaviours. This usually includes all trans people, but some transsexual or other gender diverse people prefer not to use this term.

transsexual - A person who lives as the opposite sex to the one assigned at birth and who may choose to undergo hormone therapy or surgery.

intersex - A person born with reproductive organs, genitalia, hormones and/or sex chromosomes that are not exclusively male or female.

Disclaimer:

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