

# Sexuality and gender based bullying in schools

## An equal opportunity fact sheet for students

### What is sexuality and gender based bullying?

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 person'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, often it is!

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

Just as it may be sexual orientation discrimination if someone has been treated less favourably by staff or other students because of their sexuality or their perceived sexuality.

If you feel that you or someone you know has been harassed or discriminated against you should talk to a staff member you can trust.

If this doesn't work, you or the person being bullied can lodge a complaint with the EOC or the Australian Human Rights Commission.



**"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**

### Where can I go for help?

#### Your school

Approach a staff member you can trust

#### Freedom Centre

[www.Freedom.org.au](http://www.Freedom.org.au)

[info@freedom.org.au](mailto:info@freedom.org.au)

PH:(08)9228 0354

AIDS Council PH:(08)9482 0000

#### Equal Opportunity Commission

[www.eoc.wa.gov.au](http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au)

[eoc@eoc.wa.gov.au](mailto: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](http://www.hreoc.gov.au)

[complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au)

Telephone: (02) 9284 9600

Complaints Infoline: 1300 656 419

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

[pflagwa@hotmail.com](mailto:pflagwa@hotmail.com)

Helpline (08)9228 1005

#### WA Gender Project

[info@wagenderproject.org](mailto:info@wagenderproject.org)

[www.wagenderproject.org](http://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.

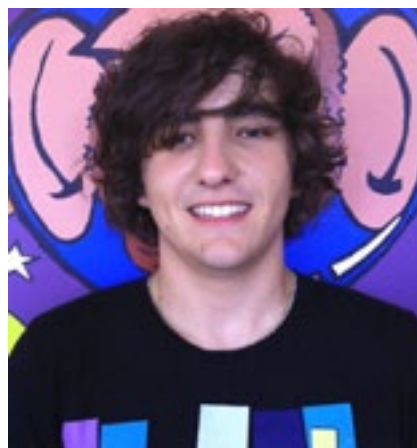
**FACT:** Sexuality can be fluid and some people experiment with their sexuality, this does not mean they are necessarily gay.

**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



**"Be proud of who you are!" Claire**



**"My teachers' silence gave the homophobes the okay." Stephen**

### 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** - A 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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### EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

ADDRESS: LEVEL 2, 141 ST GEORGE'S TERRACE PERTH WA 6000

TELEPHONE: 08 9216 3900 FREECALL: 1800 198 149

WEBSITE: [www.eoc.wa.gov.au](http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au)