

## Homophobic harassment is not here to stay. You can **do something** about it.



### What do we mean by homophobic harassment?

**Harassment** is behaviour that threatens or torments a person or group. It can be persistent or a one-off incident. It can come in the form of verbal abuse (written or spoken), intimidation, humiliation, exclusion, insult, threat, violence and physical harm. Harassment may be persistent or a one-off incident.

**Homophobia is an attitude** or belief system of **sexual prejudice**; where sexual prejudice refers to negative behaviours and attitudes towards people who are not heterosexual or do not fit normative ideas as to what it is to be a man or a woman. For more information visit the [FAQs](#).

**Homophobic harassment** is any conduct that humiliates, intimidates, insults, excludes, silences or harms an individual or group on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Regardless of any 'reasoning' behind homophobic harassment – "the boy needs to learn a lesson" – "people like that don't belong here" – *harassment is harassment* and often has legal consequences.

### Types of homophobic harassment

'**Homophobic harassment**' generally refers to harassment that is directed towards people attracted to those of the same sex. It is useful to distinguish two more specific forms of homophobic harassment:

- + **Biphobic Harassment:** Harassment directed towards people attracted to more than one sex.
- + **Transphobic Harassment:** Harassment directed towards people who identify with a gender other than the one they were born with.

The website often uses the term 'homophobia' to refer to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia collectively. This is to keep things short and simple, and not to deny the different issues facing bisexual and transgender people. You can find more detailed information specific to biphobia, transphobia, bisexual people and transgender people by clicking here: [Biphobia](#), [Transphobia](#), [FAQs](#).

## What does homophobic harassment look like?

It doesn't matter if it was 'just a joke', 'just my opinion' or whether it happened 'just this once': *harassment is harassment*. Here are some examples of what sexually prejudiced harassment looks like:

- + **Teasing**, making jokes or calling someone names based on their actual or perceived sexuality or gender identity, e.g. "dyke", "faggot", "freak", "she-male", "poof".
- + Spreading **rumours** or suggesting to others that someone is gay or lesbian, bisexual or trans, with the effect or intent of causing distress.
- + **Withholding tasks** from an employee because they're not "man enough" or "woman enough" to do the job, or threatening an employee's job security because they may be "different".
- + Demanding someone keep their sexual identity or gender identity '**under wraps**' against their will, or **exposing** someone's sexual identity or gender identity against their will.
- + Any act of **violence** or physical abuse against a person because they are (believed or assumed to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.



## What are the effects of homophobic harassment?

Harassment against homosexual, bisexual and transgender people has many negative effects upon individuals, groups and society at large. For **individuals** it can cause mild to severe depression, anxiety, self-loathing and insecurity. It can lead to rejection by family and friends, and exclusion from workplaces, venues or social groups. Such harassment makes it difficult for people to accept and express their identity ('coming out') and is also seen as the leading cause for the higher rate of suicide for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (GLBTIQ) people compared to overall population.

Homophobia, alongside biphobia and transphobia, damages **relationships** between GLBTIQ people and the wider community. Homophobia positions the GLBTIQ **community** so that it must become defensive

or even silent which often suppresses important, alternative perspectives about gender and sexuality, and life in general, from being heard, let alone understood. Most of all homophobia makes it difficult for people to appreciate true human diversity and to acknowledge the complexity of human experience.

## Your rights

Depending on the individual circumstances, **homophobic, biphobic and transphobic harassment may be against the law**. In certain areas – such as employment, the provision of goods or services, accommodation, education – it is unlawful, as discrimination, under the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*. The police may also be involved, depending on the nature of the harassment. Either way, no matter what form of harassment you (or someone you know) may be experiencing it is important that you know your rights, and that you are aware of the options available to you to stop it.

For more information visit the [Your Rights](#) section of the website.

## What you can do

Homophobic harassment is not here to stay. If you have witnessed or experienced an incident of harassment you can do something about it.

- + Go to [Take Action](#) to find how to respond to or report homophobic harassment.
- + Go to [Find Support](#) for more information on counselling and support services that can help you (or the person you know) deal with the situation.
- + Go to [Your Rights](#) for more information about homophobic harassment and the law.

The most important thing you can do is not to shrug it off as ‘just another incident’. Everyone has the right to be safe, equal, and heard.

PRODUCED BY



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



SUPPORTED BY

