

“Mate, I’ve told you before:
this is for **real** women.”



Have you ever had comments like this directed at you?

Have you ever heard these sorts of comments being said to a friend, family member, co-worker, teammate or someone at school?

If you answered ‘yes’ to either of these questions you have witnessed or experienced **transphobic harassment**.

What do we mean by transphobic harassment?

Transphobic harassment is any conduct that humiliates, intimidates, insults, excludes, silences or harms an individual or group on the basis of their actual or perceived transgender identity. Transphobic harassment can occur in the form of verbal abuse (written or spoken), intimidation, humiliation, exclusion, insult, threat, violence and physical harm. Transphobic harassment may be persistent or a one-off incident.

Transphobic harassment is a result of transphobia. **Transphobia**, like homophobia and biphobia, is a form 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. At times, this website uses the term ‘homophobic harassment’ to refer to homophobic, transphobic and biphobic harassment collectively. This is to keep things short and simple, and not to deny the different issues facing transgender and bisexual people.

Transgender people are people who identify with a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth. For example, a transgender person born with a male body may identify as a woman, or a transgender person born with a female body may identify as a man. In this sense, their gender identity and their body do not necessarily meet social expectations. A transgender person therefore may start a process to change their appearance in order to have their body match the gender they identify with. This may take the form of wearing clothing normally assigned to the gender they identify with, or may take the form of changing the physical body through hormone therapy, surgery or both.

For more information about transgender people, gender identity and gender conformity visit the [FAQs](#).

Transgender is a legitimate form of gender identity. Under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, everyone has the right to freedom, respect, equality and dignity based on their inherent humanity. Being transgender does not make one less human in any way or form. Transgender people have a human right to be seen, equal and heard members of our society. Transphobic harassment denies these basic human rights.

What does transphobic harassment look like?

Transphobic harassment can take many different forms. Here are a few examples of what transphobic harassment may look like:

- + Drawing **unwanted attention** to someone because they are not dressed in clothing 'appropriate' to their apparent physical gender (or sex).
- + **Excluding** someone from a group or activity because they are not a 'real' man or a 'real' woman.
- + **Teasing**, making jokes or calling someone names based on their actual or perceived transgender identity, e.g. "what are you?", "she-male".
- + Spreading **rumours** or suggesting to others that someone is transgender with the effect or intent of causing distress.
- + Asking someone to keep their transgender identity '**under wraps**' against their will, or exposing someone's transgender identity against their will.
- + Any act of **violence** or physical abuse against a person because they are (believed or assumed to be) transgender.

What are the effects of transphobic harassment?

Transphobic harassment 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. Transphobia makes it difficult for people to accept and express their gender identity ('coming out' as trans) and is also seen as the leading cause for the higher rate of suicide for transgender people compared to the overall population.

Transphobia damages **relationships** between transgender people and the wider community. Transphobia positions the transgender **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 transphobia, alongside homophobia and biphobia, makes it difficult for people to appreciate true human diversity and to acknowledge the complexity of human experience.

What you can do

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

- + Go to [Take Action](#) to find how to respond to or report transphobic 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 transphobic harassment and the law.

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

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