

HOMOPHOBIC HARASSMENT ISN'T HERE TO STAY. YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HOMOPHOBIC HARASSMENT?

Homophobia is an attitude or belief system of **sexual prejudice** against people who are not heterosexual or do not fit normative ideas as to what it is to be a man or a woman.

Harassment is behaviour that threatens or torments a person or group. It can be persistent or one-off. It can come as verbal abuse (written or spoken), intimidation, humiliation, exclusion, insult, threat, violence or physical harm.

Homophobic harassment is conduct that intimidates, humiliates, excludes, or harms people on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

'Homophobic harassment' often implies just same sex attracted people. Two more specific forms are: + **Biphobic Harassment:** Harassment of people attracted to more than one sex. + **Transphobic Harassment:** Harassment of those who identify with a gender other than that assigned in infancy. We often use 'homophobia' to refer to all three collectively. This keeps things simple, and is not to deny the different issues facing bisexual and transgender people.

WHAT DOES HOMOPHOBIC HARASSMENT LOOK LIKE?

It doesn't matter if it was "just a joke," "just my opinion," "just sayin'," or it happened "just this once": harassment is harassment. For example:

- > **Teasing**, joking or name-calling based on (perceived) sexual orientation 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.
- > Demanding someone keep their sexual orientation or gender identity "**under wraps**" against their will, or **exposing** it 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—homo-, bi- and transphobic—harms individuals, groups and society at large. For individuals it can cause depression, anxiety and insecurity; rejection by family and friends; exclusion from workplaces, or social groups. It makes it hard to accept and express one's identity ('coming out') and is a leading cause of the higher rate of suicide for LGBTIQ people. It damages relationships between LGBTIQ people and the wider community. Homophobia puts the LGBTIQ community on the defensive, suppressing important views from being heard. Most of all homophobia makes it difficult for people to appreciate human diversity and the complexity of human experience.

YOUR RIGHTS

Depending on 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 what was done. Either way, no matter what form of harassment you (or people you know) experience, it is important to know your rights, and be aware of the options available to you to stop it.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Homophobic harassment is not here to stay. If you have witnessed or experienced it you can do something about it. Most important is not to shrug it off as 'just another incident'. Everyone has the right to be safe, equal, heard.

Visit notohomophobia.com.au for more information