

「BULLYING AND HARASSMENT」

Understanding, Preventing, and
Responding to Harmful Behaviour





This resource is designed to enhance your understanding of bullying and harassment and offer practical guidance on how to recognise and respond to these behaviours - whether you are personally impacted, or supporting someone else.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is repeated and intentional behaviour that causes harm, distress or fear. It may involve a person or group using words or actions to exert power over someone, making them feel weak, helpless, or unsafe.

Bullying can take many forms:



VERBAL BULLYING

Insults, name-calling, threats or hurtful comments



PHYSICAL BULLYING

Hitting, pushing, or damaging belongings



SOCIAL BULLYING

Excluding someone, spreading rumours, damaging reputations



CYBERBULLYING

Using digital platforms (texts, emails, social media) to harass or intimidate

Bullying is persistent and targeted - it's not a one-off disagreement or isolated act of rudeness. It creates an ongoing pattern of harm that can deeply impact mental and emotional wellbeing.

WHAT IS HARASSMENT?

Harassment includes any unwelcome behaviour that offends, humiliates, or intimidates a person. While harassment can occur only once, bullying is usually repeated over time.

Harassment can be based on characteristics such as race, gender, disability, religion, age, or sexual orientation. Examples include:

KEY FACTS



- Australia has the sixth-highest rate of workplace bullying compared to 34 European countries. The national average has increased by over 40% in recent years.
- 37% of Australian workers have reported being cursed or yelled at in the workplace.

These statistics highlight the importance of awareness, prevention, and action. Bullying and harassment can affect anyone, in any environment - whether you're studying, working, or socialising.

Everyone has the right to a safe and respectful workplace, free from bullying and harassment.

- Making sexual jokes or comments
- Sharing offensive memes or images
- Mocking someone's accent or background
- Using slurs or derogatory language

Although bullying and harassment are different, they can overlap - and both are serious forms of harm.

IMPACTS OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Experiencing bullying or harassment can lead to a wide range of emotional, psychological, and physical effects. These can include:

- Feeling overwhelmed with guilt or self-blame
- Feeling trapped or unable to see a way out
- Feeling isolated or rejected by peers
- Struggling with depression, anxiety, or low self-esteem
- Feeling unsafe, constantly on edge
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Feeling ashamed, confused, or powerless

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STOP BULLYING

If you or someone you know is experiencing bullying:



3. Respond directly (if it feels safe)

If you feel confident and secure, you can calmly tell the person that their behaviour is inappropriate and needs to stop. Avoid confrontation - be assertive, not aggressive.



1. Speak to someone you trust

Talking to a friend, family member, teacher, or supervisor can provide much-needed support and perspective. Others may offer advice or help you take steps you hadn't considered.



4. Seek support from a teacher, counsellor, or manager

If you're in training or education, speak with a trusted educator or wellbeing officer. In a workplace, report bullying to HR, a supervisor, or use internal complaints processes.



2. Consider writing down your thoughts

If you're feeling nervous or unsure about how to raise the issue, writing it down can help you communicate clearly - whether in a note, email, or message.



5. Keep records

Document what happened, when, and who was involved. Include any screenshots or messages if relevant. This may be useful if you need to escalate the issue.

These experiences can affect a person's education, career, relationships, and overall wellbeing. Bullying and harassment are not "just part of life" - they are serious issues that require action and support.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

You have the right to feel safe and be treated fairly and respectfully. Bullying is a serious issue with significant mental and physical impacts. It can violate several of your human rights, including:

- Your right to be free from mental, emotional, and physical violence.
- Your right to education.
- Your right to a safe work environment.

If these rights are being denied, you are entitled to seek help - and action can be taken.

REFERENCES/FURTHER READING



<https://mtaq.com.au/bullying-and-harassment-understanding-preventing-and-responding-to-harmful-behaviour/>

GETTING HELP

If you, or someone else, is in immediate danger you should call the police on 000. For non-emergency police help, contact 131 444.

You can also contact various service providers for help, such as:

- The Australian Human Rights Commission has a **complaint handling service** that may investigate complaints of discrimination, harassment and bullying. Phone: 1300 656 419
- **Lifeline** is a free and confidential service staffed by trained telephone counsellors to assist people in crisis. Lifeline is open to people of all ages. Phone: 13 11 14
- **TIACS** is a free phone and text counselling service offering mental health support to Australia's blue-collar community. Phone: 0488 846 988
- **1800RESPECT** is available for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to support people impacted by domestic, family or sexual violence. Phone: 1800 737

Reaching out is a sign of strength - you do not have to go through challenges alone.

Note: The information contained in this factsheet, including contact details and links, is current at time of drafting (January 2025)