

Sexual Harassment Policy

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1. POLICY

1.1 Objective

The NSW Crime Commission is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive work environment, free from sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Sexual harassment is unlawful and prohibited by the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW) and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth). The Commission's Code of Conduct also prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace.

The [Australian Human Rights Commission's *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report \(2020\)*](#) found that there is a need for specific workplace policies that address the prevention of sexual harassment.¹

This policy draws attention to what sexual harassment is, how it manifests in workplaces, and the role we all play in preventing it.

Sexual harassment is a work health and safety issue. All NSW government sector agencies have a duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers. This includes managing the risk of sexual harassment.

Ensuring a safe and respectful work environment free from sexual harassment, provides a framework within which the Commission can attract and retain the best talent, drive better performance and promote our diversity and inclusion efforts.

1.2 Scope/Application

This policy and procedures are binding on all Commission officers including a person engaged by the Commission as a consultant or contractor under the *Crime Commission Act 2012*.

In this policy:

- 'worker' has the same meaning as in the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW) and includes all employees including leadership and management personnel, a contractor or subcontractor, an employee of a contractor or subcontractor or an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work at the Commission, an outworker, an apprentice or trainee, a student gaining work experience, a volunteer or a prescribed class of person.²
- 'workplace' is a place where work is carried out for a business or undertaking, and includes any place a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work.³

¹ *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report (2020)*, Australian Human Rights Commission, p.655 -660.

² *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW) s 7.

³ *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW) s 8.

This policy applies to circumstances including the following:

- interactions between workers
- interactions between workers and third parties (including visitors, clients or customers) where that interaction occurs in connection with any work-related activity, e.g. sexual harassment of a visitor, client or customer by a worker
- on-site, off-site, work-related social functions and conferences – wherever workers may be for work-related duties, including working from home
- out of work hours interactions where there is a strong connection to the employment relationship
- all aspects of employment, recruitment and selection, conditions and benefits, training and promotion, task allocation, shifts, hours, leave arrangements, workload, equipment and transport
- in online spaces, including email, Microsoft Teams and social media platforms where the conduct is in connection with the employment (e.g. remote work) or involving online communication between workers or between a worker and a third party.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

- to ensure all workers understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and their legal rights and responsibilities in relation to workplace sexual harassment
- to ensure all workers understand what sexual harassment is, how to prevent it, and how to respond to it in a way that minimises harm and ensures they meet their legal responsibilities.

1.4 Principles

The guiding principles for this policy are:

Strong and consistent leadership: leaders continuously reinforce that sexual harassment is unacceptable, model safe and respectful behaviour, and foster a safe reporting culture.

Sexual harassment is a work health and safety issue: all reasonably practicable steps are taken to eliminate or minimise the health and safety risks of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Prevention: sexual harassment is prevented by addressing gender inequality and unequal power relations as the key drivers and identifying and managing key risk factors.

Early intervention: early intervention approaches are used, where possible, to address workplace sexual harassment and prevent escalation.

Respecting victim-survivors: the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors is prioritised by providing a trauma-informed approach which supports, listens to, and validates the experience of victim-survivors.

All parties are treated fairly and supported: action to address sexual harassment prioritises the rights, needs and wishes of the reporter and should ensure adequate support is provided to the alleged harasser, including education and behavioural change options, while ensuring procedural fairness to all parties.

Responsive to diverse needs: understanding, respecting and embracing the many aspects of a person's identity in preventing and responding to sexual misconduct.

1.5 Legislation

Sexual harassment and harassment on the ground of sex is unlawful and prohibited by the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW) (*Anti-Discrimination Act*) and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) (*Sex Discrimination Act*). Both of these Acts apply to NSW government sector employees.

Employers or people conducting a business or undertaking now have a positive duty under the *Sex Discrimination Act* to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate, so far as possible, sexual harassment, as well as certain other conduct contrary to that Act, including harassment on the ground of sex.⁴

From 12 December 2023, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) will have power to conduct inquiries into employers or persons conducting a business or undertaking if the AHRC reasonably suspects that the employer or person is not complying with this positive duty. If non-compliance is found, the AHRC may issue a compliance notice to the employer or person and this notice may be enforced by Court order.

An employer may be 'vicariously liable' (i.e., legally responsible) for sexual harassment committed by employees or agents if the employer fails to take all reasonable steps to prevent the harassment.⁵

Some forms of sexual harassment (e.g., sexual assault, indecent exposure, stalking and obscene communications) may also be criminal offences.

Sexual harassment is also a work health and safety (WHS) risk. Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW), the NSW Crime Commission and its officers have a duty to prevent sexual harassment, as it is a hazard and risk to a worker's physical and psychological health. Workers also have WHS duties to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and not adversely affect the health and safety of others.

Some incidents of sexual harassment may be notifiable incidents under ss.35-38 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. A notifiable incident includes a person's death, or serious injury or illness requiring immediate treatment as an in-patient in a hospital.

Sexual harassment is also contrary to the ethical framework for government sector employees outlined in the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (NSW) (*GSE Act*) and contrary to the Code of Ethics and Conduct for government sector employees.⁶

1.6 Breach

Sexual harassment and other behaviour that contravenes this policy may amount to misconduct under the *GSE Act* and may otherwise be unlawful. The Commission will deal with misconduct in accordance with the requirements of s.69 of the *GSE Act*, the *Government Sector Employment Rules 2014* (NSW), applicable laws and any other relevant industrial instruments.

⁴ *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) s 47C.

⁵ *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW) s 53 and *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) s 106.

⁶ *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (NSW) Part 2 and 2A (to commence 1 July 2023).

1.7 Roles and Responsibilities

All persons who work at or attend the Commission have an obligation to ensure that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons. The following Commission staff have specific responsibilities in relation to this policy:

1.7.1 The Commissioner

In relation to allegations of sexual harassment, the Commissioner has the following functions:

- receiving advice from the Chief Operating Officer that a complaint has been received.
- reviewing the Chief Operating Officer's recommendations on the outcome of an investigation and making a determination.
- nominating the Assistant Commissioner (Legal) to oversee the conduct of an appeal investigation, if necessary.
- treating all parties involved in the matter impartially, fairly and with respect.
- reporting potential officer misconduct to the LECC.

1.7.2 The Assistant Commissioner (Legal)

The Assistant Commissioner (Legal) may be nominated by the Commissioner to respond to an appeal in situations where any of the parties involved may be dissatisfied with the outcome of an initial investigation into sexual harassment.

1.7.3 The Executive Team

In relation to this policy the Executive Team is responsible for:

- implementing this policy and procedures.
- promote a work culture where sexual harassment is unacceptable
- communicate and promote this policy to those they work with
- challenge inappropriate behaviour
- encourage an environment where workers feel safe to report sexual harassment
- prioritise the care and support of those impacted when responding to issues raised with them or observed
- treat all reports of sexual harassment seriously and confidentially and take prompt action to address them (taking into account the wishes of the person subjected to the harassment).
- ensuring that the Commission meets its legal obligations in relation to preventing sexual harassment.
- keeping allegations and their outcomes confidential.
- allocating or obtaining access to resources to assist persons who have been the victim of sexual harassment.
- where involved in a complaint, deciding on the appropriate action to take in relation to an allegation.
- where a performance management plan is entered into, monitoring compliance with the plan and reporting to the Chief Operating Officer.

1.7.4 The Chief Operating Officer

The Chief Operating Officer has the following functions under this policy:

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- appointing of a person or persons to investigate allegations of sexual harassment.
- where appropriate, working with the head of the relevant Division to ensure an equitable and appropriate outcome.
- involving the complainant (if they wish) in resolving allegations against them.
- deciding on appropriate disciplinary action if the allegation is substantiated.
- providing the Commissioner with a report on the findings of the inquiry and recommendations for any action/s to be taken.
- in cases where a decision is made to move a staff member or change their role due to allegations of sexual harassment, documenting this and taking disciplinary action against the perpetrator.
- liaising with the People & Culture Manager to ensure compliance with any disciplinary action taken.

1.7.5 The People & Culture Manager

In relation to this policy the People & Culture Manager is responsible for:

- providing impartial advice and assistance to persons reporting, or who have been reported for, sexual harassment in relation to their rights and responsibilities.
- maintaining the Unreasonable Behaviour Register.
- reporting to the Chief Operating Officer quarterly, or more frequently if appropriate, on the information contained in the Register.
- providing assistance in the case of any internal or external audit of the Commission's implementation of the policy and procedures.
- making recommendations for changes to the policy and procedures based on the efficacy of its implementation.

The People & Culture Manager will refer any matter under this policy to the Chief Operating Officer who will oversee the process from investigation to finalisation. The People & Culture Manager is also responsible for facilitating training on sexual harassment.

1.7.6 Investigating Staff

The Chief Operating Officer may nominate a person or persons to investigate the initial allegations of sexual harassment. The staff member investigating the allegations is to provide the following to the Chief Operating Officer:

- a conflict of interest declaration.
- a written account of any discussions with the person against whom an allegation has been made.
- other relevant information resulting from their investigations.

If any party involved in the allegations is dissatisfied with the findings and/or actions resulting from the initial inquiry, and launches an appeal, the Commissioner may appoint the Assistant Commissioner (Legal) to oversee the appeal process.

1.7.7 Managers and Supervisors

All those in managerial and/or supervisory roles are responsible for:

- implementing this policy and procedures in their teams
- promote a work culture where sexual harassment is unacceptable
- communicate and promote this policy to those they work with
- challenge inappropriate behaviour

- encourage an environment where workers feel safe to report sexual harassment
- prioritise the care and support of those impacted when responding to issues raised with them or observed
- treat all reports of sexual harassment seriously and confidentially and take prompt action to address them (taking into account the wishes of the person subjected to the harassment).
- modelling Commission values, ethical behaviour and maintaining a professional work environment
- taking all reasonable steps to ensure the workplace is free of sexual harassment in accordance with the Commission's Code of Conduct and related policies
- intervening when they see or suspect sexual harassment is occurring
- helping resolve any complaints of sexual harassment that come to their attention
- reporting incidents of sexual harassment to the People & Culture Manager.

The Commission considers any report of unreasonable behaviour to a Manager or Supervisor as official notification that will be referred to the People & Culture Manger.

1.7.8 Commission Staff

All Commission staff are expected to take a role in making the Commission a safe place to work. This includes a role in creating an environment in which any form of sexual harassment is not accepted. All Commission staff are responsible for:

- comply with this policy
- demonstrate high levels of personal conduct consistent with this policy and their responsibilities under the ethical framework and Code. This means they must treat others with dignity, courtesy and respect and not engage in sexual harassment or condone sexual harassment by others
- seek assistance when unsure about how to implement this policy
- be encouraged to report suspected breaches of the policy in accordance with the reporting mechanisms below.
- ensuring they do not engage in such behaviour
- encouraging people who talk to them about their experiences with such behaviour to report it to their Manager or to the People & Culture Manager
- if they witness or experience such behaviour and feel safe and confident enough to do so, calmly and clearly state that they do not like the behaviour and requesting it stop
- if the behaviour doesn't stop or they feel unable to address the matter directly with the perpetrator, reporting such behaviour to the relevant Manager or to the People & Culture Manager.

2. SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

2.1 What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is any conduct:

- that is *unwelcome* (whether or not the person impacted has explicitly identified it as unwelcome or raised a concern about the conduct)
- of a *sexual nature* (a sexual advance, request for sexual favours or other conduct of a sexual nature)
- that a *reasonable person* (aware of all the circumstances) would anticipate could possibly make the person subjected to the conduct feel *offended, humiliated or intimidated*.⁷

Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or written, including through online and phone communication.

Examples of behaviour that could be sexual harassment in the workplace include:

- unwelcome or inappropriate touching, hugging, cornering or kissing
- inappropriate staring or leering that makes the other person feel intimidated
- sexually explicit or indecent physical contact
- actual or attempted sexual assault
- being followed or watched or having someone loitering nearby
- sexual gestures, indecent exposure or inappropriate display of the body
- displaying sexually explicit images or objects around the office
- intrusive or sexually suggestive questions, comments or jokes
- comments or questions about a person's sexual activities or body
- unwanted or repeated invitations to go out on dates, start a relationship or propositions for sex
- emailing pornography or rude jokes
- sending sexual text messages, including photos, videos or memes
- communicating content of a sexual nature through social media
- threatening to share or sharing intimate images/video of someone without consent
- ongoing unwelcome contact (e.g. in person, by phone, via social media) following the end of a consensual relationship.

It should not be assumed that a person consents to another person's behaviour simply because they have not complained about it. Power imbalances and concerns about victimisation or reprisal may prevent the person from expressly objecting to the behaviour.

Some forms of sexual harassment are also criminal offences. Sexual assault (commonly referred to in the community as rape and attempted rape), sexual touching without consent and other sexual acts without consent are serious criminal offences.⁸

There is no requirement that the unwelcome conduct be repeated; a one-off incident can be sexual harassment. A broader pattern of behaviour can also constitute sexual harassment.

⁷ *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) s.22A, Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) s.28A.*

⁸ *Crimes Act 1900 (NSW) Part 3 Division 10.*

Sexual harassment may be perpetrated by various people, including an employer, supervisor, co-worker, client, contractor, volunteer, patient or customer.

Some conduct may not meet the definition of sexual harassment but still be unlawful. For example, conduct may not be sexual harassment, but amount to harassment on the ground of sex, sex discrimination and/or the creation of a hostile workplace.

A single act of conduct may fall into more than one of these categories, for example both sexual harassment and harassment on the ground of sex.

2.2 Relationships in the Workplace

Sexual or romantic interaction that is entered into freely and is reciprocated between consenting adults is not sexual harassment. This includes sexual interaction, flirtation, attraction or friendship which is invited, mutual, consensual or reciprocated action.

This does not mean that consensual sexual or romantic interactions between workers are always appropriate. Workers may face disciplinary action where their actions adversely affect other workers or their workplace responsibilities.

The Commission's Code of Conduct and the NSW Government's Code of Ethics and Conduct requires employees to disclose actual, potential or reasonably perceived conflicts of interest between an employee's personal interests (including personal relationships) and their official duties. This may require disclosure of a current or previous relationship between an employee and another worker in some circumstances. For details refer to the Commission's *Conflicts of Interest Policy & Procedures*.

Reports of sexual harassment during or following the breakdown of a consensual relationship should be handled with care. Just because two individuals are, or used to be, in a consensual sexual relationship does not preclude the possibility of sexual harassment during or following the end of the relationship. Risk factors include where there has been a relationship breakdown or where the relationship involved employees with unequal power dynamics within an organisation.

Consent should not be assumed

A key element of sexual harassment is that it is **unwelcome**.

Behaviour may be unwelcome even when it is not explicitly rejected. It should not be assumed that behaviour is consensual simply because the individual has not complained about it or has not verbalised that the behaviour was unwelcome.

Behaviour should be explicitly accepted and reciprocated. An individual should check that their advances are welcome. Checking should be verbal, and by observing non-verbal reactions and paying attention to the tone and content of any written communication such as texts.

Complex workplace dynamics, including power imbalances and concerns about reprisal or adverse treatment, may prevent the individual from expressly objecting to the conduct.

2.3 Where and How Sexual Harassment May Occur

Sexual harassment is prohibited by law in workplaces and work-related situations.

The workplace is not confined to the actual physical location used by workers. It includes any place where work is carried out and extends to common areas such as lifts, entrances, vehicles, reception areas, corridors, kitchens and toilets of the premises.

Sexual harassment can occur beyond the usual workplace and outside normal working hours. For example, workplace sexual harassment can occur in settings where there is a connection to employment, including:

- where a worker is working remotely, including if the person's workplace is their home
- in a place where the worker is undertaking work at a different location (e.g. at another business premises or a client's home)
- at social functions sponsored and paid for by the Commission
- at social functions in connection with the team/workplace, but not sponsored or paid by the Commission
- in vehicles while on the way to/from work functions or meetings
- at after-parties to such events (regardless of their location)
- in accommodation (e.g. hotel rooms) associated with or provided by the Commission
- online via use of technology and social media
- any other location in situations where the conduct commenced in the workplace and continued outside the workplace and vice-versa.

Sexual harassment can occur through electronic means (e.g. emails, text messages, sending links to pornographic websites and through social media), regardless of whether sent during work hours or not. Where there is a link to employment (i.e. involving communications between workers), workers are subject to the same rules about sexual harassment in the virtual world as they are in the real world.

In line with the Commission's ICT information security policies, workers are required to use technology and social media responsibly in the workplace and must treat others with dignity, courtesy and respect, and not engage in sexual harassment or condone sexual harassment by others.

Alcohol and sexual harassment

Consumption of alcohol at work functions or work-related events can increase the risk of sexual harassment occurring. Sexual harassment is unlawful and unacceptable in any setting, regardless of where it occurs, including when individuals have been consuming alcohol. Individuals should regulate their own behaviour and consumption of alcohol to ensure their behaviour does not adversely impact others.

Workers should be mindful that in such situations, they continue to be subject to the Commission's Code of Conduct, the NSW Government's Code of Ethics and Conduct, the Ethical Framework for the government sector and government sector behavioural standards. Leaders, managers and supervisors should be particularly mindful of their conduct in such situations, noting power imbalance may make it harder for employees to call out unwelcome behaviour.

For further information, please also refer to the Commission's *Alcohol & Other Drugs Policy & Procedures*.

3. PREVENTION

The Commission is committed to taking a proactive and holistic approach to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. This is consistent with work health and safety legislation.

Under WHS laws, the Commission has a positive duty to prevent sexual harassment, as it is a hazard and risk to a worker's physical and psychological health.

3.1 Risk Assessment

The Commission has an obligation under WHS legislation to eliminate risks to the health and safety of workers and other people so far as is reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks, they must be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.

An employer who fails to maintain a safe workplace may be held liable under common law or under applicable work health and safety legislation. From 1 December 2023, an employer who fails to discharge its positive duty to prevent sexual harassment may be required to comply with an enforcement notice.⁹ An employer may also be held liable for sexual harassment by workers under anti-discrimination legislation if they fail to take all reasonable steps to prevent the harassment.

Prevention requires identification of risks. Leaders and managers should regularly identify and assess risk factors for sexual harassment, including by seeking feedback from staff and in consultation with Health and Safety Representatives and/or unions. Workers should understand and consider work systems and practices to identify risks of exposure.

Examples of risk factors include:

- working after hours with minimal supervision
- working in restrictive spaces like cars and small rooms
- isolated work locations.

Prevention also requires assessment of the work environment. Sexual harassment may occur where a work environment or culture is sexually charged or hostile, even if the conduct is not directed at a particular person. Factors that point to a sexually hostile workplace include:

- the display of obscene or pornographic materials
- general sexual banter
- crude conversation or innuendo
- offensive jokes.

It should be noted that even if such conduct does not amount to sexual harassment, it may be unlawful because it subjects another person to a workplace environment that is hostile on the ground of sex and may breach the employer's positive duty to prevent such unlawful conduct¹⁰.

⁹ *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth) s35J, introduced by the *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Act 2022*.

¹⁰ *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) ss. 28M and 47C.

3.2 Leadership

Leaders at all levels within the Commission are required to uphold this policy in full and proactively encourage others to do so too.

Power imbalance is a significant risk factor for sexual harassment. Therefore, it is critical that leaders at all levels across the Commission comply with the Commission's Code of Conduct and the NSW Government's Code of Ethics and Conduct and all other relevant policies in place at the Commission to minimise the risk of workplace sexual harassment occurring.

3.3 Transparency

The Commission is committed to transparency with respect to sexual harassment in the workplace to encourage organisational learning and prevent incidents from happening in the workplace. In doing so, the Commission will ensure confidentiality and privacy is maintained in shared learning (or other) material.

3.4 Diversity and Inclusion

Diverse and inclusive workplaces are essential for building safe and respectful workplace environments that are free from sexual harassment. Addressing gender inequality is fundamental to eliminating workplace sexual harassment.

3.5 Knowledge and Education

The Commission will ensure all leaders, managers and supervisors are trained to appropriately respond to disclosures of sexual harassment, ensure all workers are trained to appropriately identify sexual harassment, call out behaviour as active bystanders, and are aware of the reporting and response procedures.

4. REPORTING SEXUAL HARRASMENT

The Commission strongly encourages individuals who have been sexually harassed or have witnessed sexual harassment to report the behaviour.

The Commission will take all reports of sexual harassment seriously. The response to the report will be guided by the person making the report.

Making a report about sexual harassment does not necessarily automatically trigger a formal investigation, although that may be appropriate in some cases. Support, advice and early intervention may prevent further or more serious instances of sexual harassment from occurring.

Workers are encouraged to make timely reports, while being reassured they will not be treated unfairly because of any delay in reporting harassment.

4.1 Responding to and Reporting Sexual Harassment as a Bystander

The Commission has an obligation under WHS legislation to eliminate risks to the health and safety of workers and other people so far as is reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks, they must be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.

The Commission strongly encourages and supports bystanders to call out and report inappropriate behaviour where it is safe for them to do so. Bystanders who witness sexual harassment are encouraged to:

- provide support to the person who is being subjected to sexual harassment
- formally or informally challenge concerning behaviour (if it is safe and they feel confident enough to do so)
- report sexual harassment.

4.2 Range of Reporting Pathways

Options available to report sexual harassment include:

- seeking support, advice and making a disclosure
- reporting internally to the Commission
- reporting to an external authority.

Incidents of sexual harassment can be reported informally, formally, anonymously and confidentially. Reporting pathways are outlined in more detail below.

4.2.1 Seeking Support, Advice and Making a Disclosure

People who have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment can:

- speak to a member of the Executive, a manager or supervisor, the People & Culture Manager, health and safety officer or a union representative to raise concerns, receive support and discuss options that could help resolve the issue
- access the [Employee Assistance Program](#)
- seek advice from an external body, e.g. Australian Human Rights Commission, Anti-Discrimination NSW, Safe Work NSW, NSW Women's Legal Service or Warringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre.

Individuals may wish to raise the issue directly with the other person(s) involved if they feel safe and comfortable to do so. However, there is no expectation or requirement for this.

4.2.2 Report Internally

Where self-management is not appropriate or does not resolve the matter, Commission staff are to report this to their direct Manager for advice and resolution. Failing a resolution at this level, staff must escalate the matter to the People & Culture Manager. If the matter is resolved at a managerial level, it should still be reported to the People & Culture Manager as the Commission cannot address any reoccurring behaviour unless it becomes aware of it.

If the complaint relates to a direct Manager or an Executive Team member, the complaint must be reported to either the People & Culture Manager or the Chief Operating Officer.

If a person in a managerial or supervisory role at the Commission becomes aware of an allegation of sexual harassment, they must report it to the People & Culture Manager or the Chief Operating Officer.

In order to facilitate the complaint handling process, staff should keep a written record of the behaviour they are experiencing. All records are to be factual and include as much detail as possible such as time, date, location, witnesses, what happened, what attempts were made to address the matter and the outcome. Staff are to make notes following any conversations they may have had with the perpetrator in an effort to stop the behaviour.

4.2.3 Report to an External Agency

A formal report about sexual harassment can be made to the following agencies:

- Anti-Discrimination NSW
- Australian Human Rights Commission
- Safe Work NSW
- Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC)
- NSW Police Force
- Fair Work Ombudsman
- NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) if corrupt conduct is suspected or may be involved.

The person impacted can make an external report regardless of whether they have raised a complaint internally.

5. RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF SEXUAL HARRASMENT

The Commission is committed to taking a trauma-informed and person-centred approach when responding to reports of sexual harassment. This includes:

- ensuring the safety, privacy and wellbeing of the person impacted are prioritised
- listening to the person impacted in a compassionate, non-judgmental and sensitive manner
- ensuring all processes are designed to minimise harm
- ensuring reports are handled fairly, impartiality and reasonably in accordance with procedural fairness principles
- ensuring all participants in the process have clear information about the process and how procedural fairness will be provided
- ensuring confidentiality is understood and maintained
- ensuring responses are provided in a timely manner

If an allegation of misconduct has been made, the Commission will deal with the allegation in accordance with section 69 of the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* and the associated Government Sector Employment Rules. This includes making an initial assessment of whether the allegation is vexatious or trivial, whether the conduct does not amount to misconduct, or whether there is likely to be difficulty in establishing the facts of the matter.¹¹

The Commission will always seek input from the person impacted on how they would like the matter resolved and take this into account in determining how to proceed with the complaint. Where possible, the Commission will explain its reasons if it does not handle or resolve the complaint in the way requested by the person impacted.

In some cases, the person impacted may not want any action taken and is reporting the behaviour so that the organisation knows that it has occurred. The Commission has an

¹¹ See *Government Sector Employment Act 2013 (NSW)* s69 and *Government Sector Employment (General) Rules 2014 (NSW)* r38(2) for Public Service agencies and other prescribed government sector employees.

obligation to deal with any wrongdoing it becomes aware of. In some cases, action may be warranted, even where the person impacted states that they do not want any further action to be taken. This may be the case in situations where the behaviour constitutes a work health and safety risk or a criminal offence or requires disciplinary action to be taken or where there have been repeated complaints regarding an individual's behaviour.

The Commission is also obligated to take measures to eliminate acts of victimisation in relation to sexual harassment complaints.

Upon receipt of an allegation relating to sexual harassment, the People & Culture Manager will:

- liaise with the person making the allegation
- maintain detailed case notes about the complaint, the person/s against whom complaints are made, witness statements and any outcome or resolution of the matter. These notes should also include the identity of the complainant
- maintain confidentiality about the allegations and outcomes, except for the parties involved and any other person who may need to be consulted in order to effect a resolution of the complaint
- inform the Chief Operating Officer of any similar complaints against a person and notify them if this might be an ongoing pattern of behaviour that has not been resolved
- arrange, if and as appropriate, external assistance for persons who have been the victim of such behaviour, or for persons alleged to have been involved in such behaviours
- involve the complainant in resolving the issue if the complainant wishes
- along with the Executive Directors and Directors, monitor any disciplinary action or other actions which are agreed upon by the Commissioner and/or Assistant Commissioner (Legal) to ensure compliance
- finalise case notes in relation to resolved complaints
- provide assistance to the LECC in cases where the LECC oversees the investigation.

5.1 Informal Resolution

Informal resolution or management is where the issue is resolved internally, without a formal response or investigation. Rather than making a determination as to whether the conduct occurred, the aim is to stop escalation or future incidents by educating the alleged harasser about acceptable standards of behaviour and mitigating the risk of the conduct repeating in the future.

Responding to issues through informal resolution may include:

- a leader, manager or supervisor speaking to the alleged harasser about their behaviour
- facilitating/mediating an open and respectful conversation between the parties (mediation will only occur with the full and informed consent of both the person reporting the behaviour and the alleged harasser)
- putting system changes in place to prevent further issues, e.g. moving or changing the shifts of the alleged harasser, directing the alleged harasser to participate in behavioural change counselling
- refresher training for the general work area on the requirements of this policy.

5.2 Work Health & Safety Investigation

Where a worker has chosen to report the sexual harassment as a work health and safety hazard, or the incident has been identified as a work health and safety hazard, the

Commission will conduct an investigation in accordance with the Commission's *Work Health and Safety Policy & Procedures*.

5.3 Formal Investigation

Where a formal investigation is appropriate, the Chief Operating Officer will appoint an internal or external investigator to investigate the allegation/s and make factual findings, and report to the Commissioner, which will then decide an outcome in accordance with applicable legislation.

Investigations will be conducted in a confidential, impartial, timely and fair manner. Investigations will adopt a trauma-informed approach, with awareness of power imbalances that may exist between the parties.

The parties involved will be notified of their right to have a support person or union representative to assist them throughout the process.

The investigation will be commenced as soon as possible with the aim being for it to be finalised within 90 business days. Where appropriate, the parties will be kept regularly informed during the period of the investigation.

Investigations will be undertaken in line with relevant organisational policies, procedures and industrial instruments. Part 8 of the *Government Sector Employment (General) Rules 2014* sets out the procedural requirements for dealing with allegations of misconduct by Commission employees.

In some circumstances, an employee who is the subject of a complaint may be suspended from duty whilst an investigation is ongoing and/or a decision is made in relation to the complaint.¹²

5.4 Procedural Fairness

The Commission acknowledges that employees who are the subject of allegations of wrongdoing, may experience significant stress levels. The Commission will protect their rights by:

- assuring them that any report will be dealt with impartially, fairly and reasonably in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness
- confirming that the report is an allegation only if and until information or evidence obtained through an investigation substantiates the allegation
- providing them with information about their rights and the progress and outcome of any investigation
- referring them to the Employee Assistance Program for support
- allowing all parties the opportunity to respond to any allegations made against them before any report is finalised and a final decision is made.

Any reports made that are found to be intentionally falsified or vexatious in nature will be actioned accordingly – noting that this conduct may itself amount to misconduct under the GSE Act.

¹² *Government Sector Act 2013* (NSW) s70.

5.5 Confidentiality, Privacy and Transparency

The Commission will treat reports of sexual harassment confidentially, including:

- the identity of the person impacted, alleged harasser/s, and any other participants involved in the investigation process
- information provided or collected during the investigation of an allegation.

It is expected that all workers involved in an investigation will keep details of the allegation confidential until the investigation has concluded. Failure to do so may result in further consequences or disciplinary action.

Ensuring confidentiality should not prevent the people involved from seeking support, e.g. through the Employee Assistance Program, bringing a support person to meetings.

Some information reported may need to be disclosed to involved parties in order to properly investigate the matter.

Where there is reason to believe that a person is a risk to themselves or others, and in the case of reportable conduct (e.g. child protection, serious indictable offence), The Commission may need to notify appropriate authorities.

Once the matter is finalised, The Commission will not restrict the impacted person's right to speak in their personal capacity.

5.6 Possible Outcomes

Consequences for the Responsible Person(s)

Where allegations of sexual harassment are substantiated, action that is consistent and proportionate will be taken to hold the responsible person to account for their behaviour. The possible outcomes will also depend on whether an informal resolution or a formal complaint was preferred by the person impacted. Possible outcomes include:

- disciplinary action, e.g. warning, suspension, demotion or dismissal
- a change to working hours or locations
- an apology
- agreement on protocols to manage the relationship moving forward
- refresher sexual harassment prevention training
- coaching or performance counselling
- behavioural change counselling.

Where a serious allegation of sexual harassment is substantiated, it is likely this will be found to be misconduct and disciplinary action will follow.

Restorative actions for the Impacted Person(s)

The Commission will work with the impacted person(s) to understand and implement, where possible, any actions that may help them to recover from the incident, rebuild relationships at work and continue a successful career with the Commission.

5.7 Criminal Matters

Where a report of sexual harassment is made that may involve behaviour constituting a criminal offence (e.g. sexual assault, indecent exposure, stalking, obscene communications), the matter should immediately be referred to the Chief Operating Officer for advice.

In general, the Commission will not report sexual offences to the police without the consent of the person making the report, in line with a person-centred and trauma-informed approach. However, when there is an imminent risk to safety, there will be circumstances when police may need to be called without consent.

5.8 Protection Against Victimisation

Victimising another person for making an allegation or report of sexual harassment is unlawful under the *Anti-Discrimination Act* and the *Sex Discrimination Act*, unless it involves lawful action in relation to an allegation that is proven to be false and not made in good faith.¹³ Victimisation occurs when a person is subjected to, or threatened with, detriment for their involvement in the matter. It can include:

- bullying or intimidation by co-workers
- being denied a promotion or being moved to a position with lower responsibility
- dismissal or threatened dismissal from employment
- being refused further contract work.

Victimisation of people who have, or might, complain of sexual harassment, as well as bystanders or people perceived to have helped a person make a report of sexual harassment, is also unlawful.

Taking action against an employee for making a report can also constitute misconduct under s.69 of the *GSE Act*.

6. RECORD KEEPING

The Commission keeps confidential records of all correspondence with parties in relation to reports of sexual harassment, including how the report is addressed, letters, emails, file notes of phone calls and conversations, investigation reports and all evidence collected.

Records are kept in accordance with applicable legislation, including the *Government Sector Employment (General) Rules 2014*, *State Records Act 1998* and applicable privacy legislation and applicable Commission records management and privacy related policies.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Commission is committed to effective monitoring, evaluation and organisational learning processes that will foster a safe and respectful work environment. This includes:

¹³ *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW) s 50 and *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) ss 47A, 94.

- regularly collecting and assessing reports and relevant data for trends, patterns and lessons to drive continuous improvement
- regularly consulting with workers and unions to share knowledge and understand issues from a worker perspective
- regularly reviewing and updating sexual harassment prevention plans to drive continuous improvement
- sharing information about trends, patterns and lessons with staff, leadership, unions management boards or committees and relevant stakeholders
- ensuring staff have confidence that sexual harassment is being eliminated in their workplace.

APPENDIX 1

ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Employee Assistance Provider

The Commission provides its employees with access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which is a short-term, confidential, counselling service designed to offer a problem-solving, solution-oriented approach to support employees with personal or work-related issues.

The EAP is staffed by independent qualified practitioners.

All employees (and their immediate family) have access to the EAP, which provides for a limited number of counselling sessions at no cost to the employee and can be provided over the phone or face-to-face.

Leaders, managers and supervisors can access Manager Assist through the EAP, to help with workplace issues.

The Commission's EAP provider is [TELUS Health](#).

Service Provider	Contact Details
Australian Human Rights Commission	www.humanrights.gov.au Info Line: 1300 656 419 (local call) TTY: 1800 620 241 (toll free) Fax: (02) 9284 9611 Email: infoservice@humanrights.gov.au
Anti-Discrimination NSW	https://www.antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au/ Phone: (02) 9268 5544 Free call: 1800 670 812 Email: complaintsadb@justice.nsw.gov.au
Community Legal Centres Australia	www.naclc.org.au/directory Phone: (02) 9160 9500
NSW Police Force	Phone: 000 (for emergencies) 13 14 44 (Police Assistance Line – for non-urgent police assistance)
Fair Work Commission	https://www.fwc.gov.au/about-us/contact-us Phone: 1300 799 675
SafeWork NSW	https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/contact-us Phone: 13 10 50
NSW Sexual Violence Helpline (formerly NSW Rape Crisis)	https://dvnsdsm.org.au/dvsm_directory/nsw-sexual-violence-helpline/ Phone: (02) 9621 0800 (provides support for people escaping/experiencing domestic and family violence and homelessness)
Lifeline Australia	https://www.lifeline.org.au/ Phone: 13 11 14 (24-hour crisis support)
1800 RESPECT	https://www.1800respect.org.au/ Phone: 1800 737 732 (24-hour support for those experiencing or at risk of experiencing domestic, family or sexual violence)

Service Provider	Contact Details
Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline	https://fullstop.org.au/contact-us Phone: 1800 497 212 (24-hour support for anyone from the LGBTIQ+ community whose life has been affected by sexual domestic and/or family violence)
QLife	https://qlife.org.au/ Phone: 1800 184 527 (3pm – midnight – provides anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships)
Law Access NSW	https://www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au/ Phone: 1300 888 529 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) a free government telephone service that provides legal information, referrals and in some cases, advice for people who have a legal problem in NSW)
eSafety Commissioner	https://www.esafety.gov.au/report
Public Service Association	https://psa.asn.au/
NSW Women’s Legal Service	https://www.wlsnsw.org.au/ Phone: (02) 8745 6988 1800 801 501 (rural) (9:30am – 12:30pm Monday, 1:30pm – 4:30pm Tuesday, 9:30am – 12:30pm Thursday) Free confidential legal information, advice and referrals for women in NSW with a focus on family law, child care and protection, Victims Support, and sexual assault.
Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women’s Legal Centre	https://www.wirringabaiya.org.au/ Phone: 1800 686 587 (9am – 5pm) a NSW state-wide community legal centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and youth.

Relevant Legislation and Documents

The following legislation and documents relate to this policy:

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Industrial Relations Act 1996* (NSW)
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW)
- *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998* (NSW)
- *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW)
- NSWCC Code of Conduct
- NSWCC Grievance Handling (Work Related) Policy and Procedures
- NSWCC Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance Policy and Procedures
- NSWCC Internal Reporting Policy and Procedures
- NSWCC Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures
- NSWCC Employment Agreements
- NSWCC Investigation Conflict of Interests Declaration
- Anti-discrimination NSW definition of 'victimisation'
- Safe Work Australia definition of 'online abuse' and 'discrimination' and 'unreasonable behaviour'
- Safe Work NSW definition of 'harassment' and 'bullying'

Version History

Version	Effective date	Update comments	Author
1.0	1Mar24	Initial version	People & Culture Manager

Publication Information

Title	Sexual Harassment Policy
Policy Type	Policy
Policy Number	HR2024/1
Policy Approver	Chief Operating Officer
Policy Developer	People & Culture
Policy Contact	People & Culture Manager
Approval date	5 February 2024
Effective date	1 March 2024
Review date	No more than 5 years from the effective date
Supersedes	Nil
Classification	Unclassified
Related documents	See Relevant Legislation and Documents