

# Sexuality and gender based bullying in schools

## An equal opportunity fact sheet for parents/care givers

### What is sexuality and gender based bullying?

Everyone knows about bullying in schools. But what if the bullying behaviour is sexual in nature?

All schools have a duty of care to their students and bullying is not tolerated.

But does this zero tolerance extend to bullying behaviour that is sexual in nature, and does it apply to sexuality and gender diverse students at your child's school?

Sexuality and gender based bullying can be similar to sexual harassment or sexual orientation discrimination.

It can be suggestive comments or jokes, insults or taunts, pictures, emails or texts sent by the bully and intrusive questions about a student's private life.

It can even be use of language such as another student saying, "that's so gay".

### Is it against the law?

Yes sexuality and gender based bullying can be against the law.

If the bullying behaviour is sexual in nature it can be sexual harassment.

Just as it can be sexual orientation discrimination if a student has been treated less favourably by staff or students because of their sexuality, their perceived sexuality or the sexuality of their family or friends.



**"It can be really hard to be out at school. When my girlfriend and I were bullied, it helped to talk about it with my mum and teachers." Alexis**

### What can I do about it?

#### Speak to a school staff member

Every school has an anti-bullying policy and procedure that may include gender and sexuality diverse bullying, so make sure you ask the principal or staff about the school's complaint procedure, this way you can bring the bullying behaviour to the attention of the school which has the responsibility to make sure the behaviour doesn't continue.

**"As a parent of a lovely daughter who is also in a committed lesbian relationship I know just how special that relationship is to my daughter and myself. I would urge all parents to support their gay children."**

**John Wilson**

#### Lodge a complaint with the EOC

If your child or you feel you have been harassed or discriminated against you can lodge a complaint to the EOC or the Australian Human Rights Commission.

**"Everyone has the right to be educated in a safe environment free from discrimination, harassment and bullying."**

**WA Equal Opportunity Commissioner  
Yvonne Henderson.**

## Where can I go for help?

### The staff at your child's school

In the first instance approach a trustworthy teacher at your child's school

### Freedom Centre

[www.Freedom.org.au](http://www.Freedom.org.au)

[info@freedom.org.au](mailto:info@freedom.org.au)

PH:(08)9228 0354

AIDS Council PH:(08)9482 0000

### Equal Opportunity Commission

[www.eoc.wa.gov.au](http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au)

[eoc@eoc.wa.gov.au](mailto:eoc@eoc.wa.gov.au)

PH:(08)9216 3900

Toll Free:1800 198 149

### Australian Human Rights Commission

[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

[complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au)

Telephone: (02) 9284 9600

Complaints Infoline: 1300 656 419

### Parents, Family & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG)

[pflagwa@hotmail.com](mailto:pflagwa@hotmail.com)

Helpline (08)9228 1005

### WA Gender Project

[info@wagenderproject.org](mailto:info@wagenderproject.org)

[www.wagenderproject.org](http://www.wagenderproject.org)

## Myth Busting!

**MYTH** : Homosexuality is contagious.

**FACT** : People cannot "catch" their sexuality. People cannot be "recruited" to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.

**MYTH** : Gay men & lesbians don't have long-term relationships.

**FACT** : Gay, lesbian and bisexual relationships do work. Long term partnerships are not rare at all. Many long term same sex couples may not access gay venues or frequent "the scene" and therefore are not as visible to the community.

**MYTH** : Bisexuals just can't make up their mind.

**FACT** : The point is they have! Sexuality is a range between exclusively gay and exclusively heterosexual, and many people are naturally in between. Everyone has a right to be who they are.

**MYTH** : Transgender people are confused about their gender.

**FACT** : Transgender people feel very sure about what gender they are. If they weren't, they wouldn't risk exposure to bullying and segregation to live as that gender.

### Glossary of Terms

**gender** - The sense of self associated with cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity.

**sexuality** - Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction.

**sexually** - Sexual in nature.

**diversity** - State of being diverse or different.

**sexual orientation** - A person's sexual identity in relation to the gender to which they are attracted.

**trans** - An umbrella term including transsexual and transgender.

**transgender** - A term used to describe a broad

range of gender identities and/or behaviours. This usually includes all trans people, but some transsexual or other gender diverse people prefer not to use this term.

**transsexual** - A person who lives as the opposite sex to the one assigned at birth and who may choose to undergo hormone therapy or surgery.

**intersex** - A person who is born with reproductive organs, genitalia and/or sex chromosomes that are not exclusively male or female.

#### Disclaimer:

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### EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

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