

MERRI OUTREACH SUPPORT SERVICE

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT POLICY

Guiding principles

Sexual harassment means that someone is making unwelcome comments or advances of a sexual nature or is requesting unwanted sexual activity. There is often a power difference between the person making the advances and the person being harassed. It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or private consenting friendships, sexual or otherwise.

Examples of sexual harassment include:

- Persistent unwelcome demands or even subtle pressures for sexual favours or outings;
 - Leering, patting, pinching, touching or unnecessary familiarity;
 - Offensive comments on physical appearance, dress or private life;
 - Jokes, messages or telephone calls of an offensive sexual nature;
 - Distribution or display of offensive material;
 - Sexual assault (a criminal offense).
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- Sexual harassment is illegal under the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1984) and the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act (1984).

Residents, staff, management committee and members of Merri Outreach Support Service are entitled to be treated fairly and equally and to work in and use the service in an environment that is free of sexual harassment. The service considers sexual harassment to be an unacceptable form of behaviour that will not be tolerated. The service recognises that this behaviour can happen within any area of the service – between workers, between workers and management, between residents, between workers and service users.

Policy

Merri Outreach Support Service will ensure that all residents, staff, members and people using the service are treated fairly and equally and are protected from sexual harassment. All reports of sexual harassment will be taken seriously, treated sympathetically and investigated thoroughly and confidentially. Action will be taken against anyone found to have sexually harassed someone associated with Merri Outreach Support Service.

Procedures

Anyone who believes that they are being sexually harassed are encouraged, if possible, to inform their offenders that their behaviour is offensive, unacceptable and contrary to Merri Outreach Support Service policy. They are entitled to the full support of the staff and committee of management in this action.

Merri Outreach Support Service will act immediately on any reports of sexual

harassment and will support and protect anyone associated with the service who believes that they have been a victim of sexual harassment. This includes ensuring that people who make complaints about sexual harassment are not victimised or disadvantaged in any way as a result of their complaint or its investigation.

If a person wishes to make a complaint of sexual harassment at the Service, any or all of the following steps can be taken:

Speaking to a worker with whom the person feels comfortable;

- Asking someone with whom the person feels comfortable to raise the issue with staff;
- Speaking to a member of the Committee of Management;
- Contacting the Equal Opportunity Commission (Level 3, 380 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, 3000, Ph. 92817100).