



BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Governance advice and support for community organisations

What constitutes Bullying and Harassment?

Bullying and Harassment are characterised by persistent and repeated negative behaviour, directed at someone, that creates a risk to their health and safety. Unfortunately, bullying and harassment do occur in our community groups sometimes. In addition to the impact this can have on people's health, this behaviour can also distract the group's efforts away from working on their core business.

Your obligations

If *Bullying and Harassment* are happening within your group, at a minimum you have a moral obligation to stop it from occurring, and if you have any paid staff, you also have a legal obligation under the Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 to stop it, regardless of whether the person affected is an employee or a volunteer.

What to do?

Some strategies to prevent *Bullying and Harassment* from happening in the first place include:

- Having a policy and procedures in place which clearly states that bullying and harassment are unacceptable and will not be tolerated
- Ensuring people are aware of the policy and procedures, by issuing people with a copy or through induction and other training
- Monitoring what is going on to check everyone is following your policy and procedures

If *Bullying or Harassment* are happening, you need to respond as soon as you become aware of it. An initial response could simply be for the person being bullied or harassed to self-manage the situation, or someone in a role of authority may need to speak to the person who is behaving inappropriately. If the matter is sufficiently serious, a more formal investigation may be needed. Remember that threats to harm someone, acts of violence, assault, property damage and stalking are all criminal matters and should be referred to the police.