
Regional Heritage Transport Association – Junee (RHTA)

Discrimination and harassment policy

1. Scope

This policy is based on a template provided by the Australian Human Rights Commission. It applies to:

- Board members
- all volunteers
- how RHTA provides services to Museum visitors and how it interacts with other members of the public
- on-site, off-site or after-hours work; work-related social functions; wherever and whenever volunteers may be as a result of their RHTA duties
- volunteers' treatment of other volunteers and members of the public encountered in the course of their RHTA duties.

2. Aims

RHTA is committed to providing a safe, flexible and respectful environment for volunteers and clients free from all forms of discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.

All RHTA volunteers are required to treat others with dignity, courtesy and respect.

3. Volunteer rights and responsibilities

All volunteers are entitled to:

- recruitment and selection decisions based on merit and not affected by irrelevant personal characteristics
- work free from discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment
- the right to raise issues or to make an enquiry or complaint in a reasonable and respectful manner without being victimised
- reasonable flexibility in working arrangements, especially where needed to accommodate their family responsibilities, disability, religious beliefs or culture.

All volunteers must:

- follow the standards of behaviour outlined in this policy
- offer support to people who experience discrimination, bullying or sexual harassment, including providing information about how to make a complaint
- avoid gossip and respect the confidentiality of complaint resolution procedures
- treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect.

3.1 Additional responsibilities of Board Members

Board Members must also:

- model appropriate standards of behaviour
- take steps to educate and make volunteers aware of their obligations under this policy and the law
- intervene quickly and appropriately when they become aware of inappropriate behaviour
- act fairly to resolve issues and enforce workplace behavioural standards, making sure relevant parties are heard
- help volunteers resolve complaints informally
- refer formal complaints about breaches of this policy to the appropriate complaint handling officer for investigation
- ensure volunteers who raise an issue or make a complaint are not victimised
- ensure that recruitment decisions are based on merit and that no discriminatory requests for information are made
- seriously consider requests for flexible work arrangements.

4. Unacceptable workplace conduct

Discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment are unacceptable at RHTA.

Volunteers (including Board Members) found to have engaged in such conduct might be counselled, warned, disciplined or otherwise dealt with in accordance with the RHTA Constitution.

4.1 Discrimination

Discrimination is treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic protected by the law, such as sex, age, race or disability.

Discrimination can occur:

Directly, when a person or group is treated less favourably than another person or group in a similar situation because of a personal characteristic protected by law.

Indirectly, when an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice is imposed that has, or is likely to have, the effect of disadvantaging people with a personal characteristic protected by law.

It is also against the law to treat someone unfavourably because you assume they have a personal characteristic or may have it at some time in the future.

4.2 Bullying

Bullying can take many forms, including jokes, teasing, nicknames, emails, pictures, text messages, social isolation or ignoring people, or unfair work practices.

Under Federal law, this behaviour does not have to be repeated to be discrimination – it may be a one-off event.

Behaviours that may constitute bullying include:

- sarcasm and other forms of demeaning language
- threats, abuse or shouting
- coercion
- isolation
- inappropriate blaming
- ganging up
- constant unconstructive criticism
- deliberately withholding information or equipment that a person needs to do their job or access their entitlements
- unreasonable refusal of requests for leave, training or other workplace benefits.

Bullying is unacceptable in RHTA.

4.3 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a specific and serious form of harassment. It is unwelcome sexual behaviour, which could be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment can be physical, spoken or written. It can include:

- comments about a person's private life or the way they look
- sexually suggestive behaviour, such as leering or staring
- brushing up against someone, touching, fondling or hugging
- sexually suggestive comments or jokes
- displaying offensive screen savers, photos, calendars or objects
- repeated unwanted requests to go out
- requests for sex
- sexually explicit posts on social networking sites
- insults or taunts of a sexual nature
- intrusive questions or statements about a person's private life
- sending sexually explicit emails or text messages
- inappropriate advances on social networking sites
- accessing sexually explicit internet sites
- behaviour that may also be considered to be an offence under criminal law, such as physical assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault, stalking or obscene communications.

Just because someone does not object to inappropriate behaviour in the workplace at the time, it does not mean that they are consenting to the behaviour.

Sexual harassment is covered in the workplace when it happens at work, at work-related events, between people sharing the same workplace, or between colleagues outside of work.

All volunteers and volunteers have the same rights and responsibilities in relation to sexual harassment.

A single incident is enough to constitute sexual harassment – it doesn't have to be repeated.

All incidents of sexual harassment – no matter how large or small or who is involved – require employers and managers to respond quickly and appropriately.

RHTA recognises that comments and behaviour that do not offend one person can offend another. This policy requires all volunteers and volunteers to respect other people's limits.

4.4 Victimisation

Victimisation is subjecting or threatening to subject someone to a detriment because they have asserted their rights under equal opportunity law, made a complaint, helped someone else make a complaint, or refused to do something because it would be discrimination, sexual harassment or victimisation. Victimisation is against the law.

It is also victimisation to threaten someone (such as a witness) who may be involved in investigating an equal opportunity concern or complaint.

Victimisation is a very serious breach of this policy and is likely (depending on the severity and circumstances) to result in formal discipline against the perpetrator.

RHTA has a zero tolerance approach to victimisation.

4.5 Gossip

It is unacceptable for volunteers at RHTA to talk with other volunteers members about any complaint of discrimination or harassment.

Breaching the confidentiality of a formal complaint investigation or inappropriately disclosing personal information obtained in a professional role is a serious breach of this policy and may lead to formal discipline.

5. Resolving issues at RHTA

RHTA strongly encourages any volunteers or members who believes they have been discriminated against, bullied, sexually harassed or victimised to take appropriate action by raising their concern with a member of the Board.

Volunteers who do not feel safe or confident to take such action may seek assistance from any member of the Board for advice and support or action on their behalf.

6. More information

If you have a query about this policy or need more information please contact a member of the Board.

7. Review details

This policy was adopted by RHTA on 18 November 2019.

This policy was last updated at adoption.