

Statement

30 July 2020



Sexual Harassment in the Tasmanian Legal Profession

The Issue

The Legal Profession Board recognises that sexual harassment of any kind is unacceptable.

Current studies¹ have revealed that sexual harassment in the workplace is occurring at an alarming rate, with the legal profession in particular experiencing high levels of unacceptable behaviour.

Legal Profession Board of Tasmania's Commitment

Complaints made to the Board which allege sexual harassment will be taken seriously by the Board and dealt with in accordance with the law.

Sexual harassment is capable of constituting unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct. As well as being prohibited under Federal and State anti-discrimination laws, legal practitioners are subject to professional rules which prohibit them engaging in sexual harassment or discriminatory conduct.

In addition to maintaining a zero tolerance stance in relation to sexual harassment within its own organisation, the Board is also committed to effectively addressing issues of sexual harassment in the legal profession.

Response

In adopting its position against sexual harassment, the Board will contribute to the broader discussion regarding the prevention of sexual harassment within the legal profession.

The Board's response includes a commitment to:

- Enhancing awareness of and educating in relation to sexual harassment in the legal profession, by publishing a fact sheet for the profession;
- Engaging with and adopting best practice complaints management in relation to complaints of sexual harassment by legal practitioners;
- Ensuring the Board and its employees are trained to enable the appropriate handling of sensitive complaints; and
- Supporting the legal profession to remove the stigma of reporting sexual harassment and eliminate any form of retribution or consequences for doing so.

¹ See for example, The Law Society of Tasmania 2019 survey of their members; The International Bar Association, Us Too? Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession (Report, May 2019).

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Legal practitioners have a responsibility to act ethically and lead by example because of their status as professionals. Equally, employers have a responsibility to ensure their workplaces are free from sexual harassment. Lawyers behaving unethically, including by sexually harassing their colleagues or clients, diminishes the public's confidence in the legal profession and in the administration of justice. Sexual harassment in the legal profession is an issue that can no longer be ignored.

Making and Complaint & Further Information

If you wish to make a complaint relating to sexual harassment by a lawyer, or have a confidential discussion regarding a matter of sexual harassment, you can contact the Legal Profession Board in the following ways:

- Call the Legal Profession Board on 03 6226 3000
- Email enquiry@lpbt.com.au
- Visit the Board at Level 3, 147 Macquarie Street, Hobart Tasmania, 7000
- Send mail addressed to the Legal Profession Board of Tasmania, GPO Box 2335, Hobart TAS 7000;



Frank Ederle
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

30 July 2020



Keyran Pitt QC
BOARD CHAIRPERSON

30 July 2020

Further information

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Legal Profession Board of Tasmania.

We are located at Level 3,
147 Macquarie Street
Hobart Tasmania.

Website:
www.lpbt.com.au

Postal address:
GPO Box 2335,
Hobart 7001

Telephone:
(03) 6226 3000

Email:
enquiry@lpbt.com.au

Fax:
(03) 6223 6055

The normal hours of opening
at our office are between
9:00am and 5:00pm on
weekdays.