

Who do I complain to?

This fact sheet discusses how to decide when to make a complaint, and provides contact details for relevant agencies.

You have the right to complain!

Being harassed or discriminated against is not a by-product of working in the sex industry. Sex workers have the same right as everyone else in the community to be treated with respect, dignity and justice.

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, there may be something you can do about it.

Deciding whether to make a complaint

So what do you do when you feel you have been mistreated? Firstly, it is important to carefully consider your feelings about the situation and examine all the options available to you.

Before deciding on the course of action you will take, ask yourself the following:

- How do I feel? Why do I feel this way?
- What are my options?
- Are there any steps I can take to rectify this situation myself?
- Should I talk to the person first or make a formal complaint?
- Who can I contact for advice?
- What is involved in making a formal complaint? What will the ramifications be?

To help identify your feelings and explore your options, it can really help to talk to someone you trust and enlist their support. If you don't have a friend you can trust, you are always welcome to call us to discuss your feelings confidentially. Once you have talked through your feelings, the best course of action may seem clearer.

In some cases, the best way to deal with a concern may be to discuss the matter directly with the person responsible. This is particularly important if you think there is a need to clarify the other person's intention or if there is any possibility of a misunderstanding. For example, someone may have made a comment in jest that you found offensive, but it wasn't the intention of the person to hurt you at all. By letting the person know how it made you feel, you are not only validating yourself, you are letting the other person know that you consider certain comments or behaviour to be unacceptable or inappropriate.

To do this, it is important to think through your approach carefully – if you are too confrontational or aggressive, the person may become defensive and this can inflame the situation. However, if you approach the person calmly but assertively, and express how you feel, you may find you are able to resolve the matter without further action.

In other situations, it may not be appropriate or safe to approach the person directly. If you are confident there has been no misunderstanding, and fear that your complaint will not be dealt with appropriately, or that there may be some negative ramifications for you personally, it is probably best to explore other channels.

Fact sheet for sex workers

Before making a formal complaint, document your concerns and any relevant time frames. For example, if your complaint is about sexual harassment, write down exactly what happened or what was said, and when. This helps you to file your complaint by clarifying the concerns in your own mind.

If you decide not to approach the person directly, the next thing you need to consider is whether you should have your complaint dealt with internally or externally. For example, if you have a complaint about a staff member in a government department should you take the complaint to their supervisor or have it dealt with externally by the appropriate investigating body? This is difficult to answer and depends upon the individual circumstances of the complaint. If you are not sure which steps to take, you may like to telephone the investigating bodies listed below for some advice. In some cases, your best option may be to seek independent legal advice before you take action.

Finally, whether you decide to pursue a formal complaint or not, it is important that you process the feelings you've experienced and share your thoughts with someone you trust. Experiences of this kind can have a detrimental effect on your self-esteem and sense of self-worth, and it is important that you take the time to look after your psychological and emotional needs.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Sexual harassment and discrimination

Anti-Discrimination Commission Qld

1300 130670

www.adcq.qld.gov.au

For advice on making complaints about sexual harassment, public vilification due to race or religion, or discrimination.

Discrimination complaints can be made based on gender, race, marital status, pregnancy, breastfeeding, parental status, age, lawful sexual activity, disability, religion,

political belief or activity, trade union activity, or association with anyone in certain areas of public life including: employment, goods and services, education, accommodation, superannuation and insurance, disposal of land, club membership and affairs, local government, or administration of State laws and programs).

Workplace health and safety

Workplace Health and Safety

1300 369915

www.whs.qld.gov.au

For advice on problems relating to health and safety in the workplace, including safety standards.

Prostitution

Prostitution Licensing Authority (PLA)

3858 9500

www.pla.qld.gov.au

Responsible for receiving complaints about prostitution, and referring any matters it considers appropriate for investigation to another agency. Any person – including sex workers from any part of the industry – can make a complaint about:

- health and safety problems in a licensed brothel
- people younger than 18 years working in a licensed brothel
- illegal parlours – complaints referred to Queensland Police Service
- illegal advertising of prostitution services (complaints referred to Queensland Police Service)
- unfair work practices.

All complaints are kept confidential, and can be made anonymously. Complaints will only be referred to the Queensland Police Service with your permission.

Fact sheet for sex workers

Police

Queensland Police Service

Contact Police Headquarters on 3364 6464 or your local police station.

www.police.qld.gov.au

Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC)

3360 6060 or 1800 061 611 (toll free)

www.cmc.qld.gov.au

Handles complaints made about public sector officials (including prison officers).

Tenancy

Residential Tenancy Authority

1300 366 311

www.rta.qld.gov.au

Provides advice on tenancy queries and complaints, has a dispute resolution service to help resolve difficulties between landlords and tenants, and can investigate complaints.

Solicitors

Queensland Law Society

3842 5888

www.qls.com.au

Responsible for maintaining professional standards among solicitors and can investigate complaints made against solicitors or their employers.

Health providers

Health Rights Commission

3234 0272 / 1800 077308 (outside Brisbane)

www.hrc.qld.gov.au

Investigates complaints about health services, such as complaints relating to confidentiality, medication, misdiagnosis, consent, delay, quality of treatment or sexual misconduct.