

Summary: Preventing Sexual and Racial Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination in the NZ Comedy Industry

The New Zealand comedy industry now has official policy on harassment, and on procedures for dealing with it. That 12 page document is available online via the NZ Comedy Guild, the NZ Comedy Trust, the Festival, the Classic, Notorious Management, and other industry venues and producers. Everyone in the industry should read that full document, but we have also prepared this TLDR Summary.

1, 2 & 3. Who Is Covered, and When:

Our policy applies to everyone in the places we work: comedians, producers, agents, and venue staff, crew, managers and owners, clients and members of the public. It also applies wherever and whenever workers may be - including before and after gigs, or while on tour. It also covers behaviour in the digital world - on social media, by text, calls and email.

4. Key Principles:

We are committed to giving all of us an environment that is free from sexual and racial harassment, bullying and discrimination, and to providing effective procedures for managing complaints.

What is Sexual Harm? Any unwanted sexual behaviour – verbal, visual, or physical in the real world, or in the digital world. This includes unwanted sexual comments, unwanted questions or disclosure of a person’s gender or sexuality, showing offensive sexual material, or forced sexual contact.

Consent & Power Dynamics: Sexual harm is an abuse of power, and can happen when, for example, one person has been in the industry longer than another, or has the ability (or implies they have the ability) to help or hinder another person’s career. Consent means freely and willingly participating without pressure or fear of consequences.

Creating a Healthy Culture: A healthy culture is not just the absence of harassment and harm, but involves actively working to promote healthy and professional relationships and communities where people are happy, fulfilled, and able to create high quality work for our audiences and ourselves. Experienced industry members have a responsibility to show leadership, and model respectful behaviour in the green room, and when introducing fellow comedians on stage. Everyone in the industry must think of venues as – first and foremost – professional workplaces where they treat their co-workers with dignity, courtesy and respect, and with no expectation of personal intimate relationships.

Training: NZ Comedy can provide support and training to help us all understand how to prevent harassment, bullying and discrimination, and to work through the process for resolving concerns.

5. DEFINITIONS

What Is Discrimination?

Treating someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, marital status or political opinion.

What Is Harassment?

Unwelcome and unsolicited behaviour that a reasonable person would consider to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening. It can be physical, spoken or written, or sent digitally.

What is Sexual Harassment?

Unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Again, this can be physical, verbal or written, or sent digitally via phone, email or social media. And just because someone does not object to inappropriate behaviour in the moment does not mean they are consenting to the behaviour and can't raise it later. Consent is not "silence" but needs to be explicit. Again, a comedy venue is a professional workplace for the people who work there, not a social environment, and high professional standards apply. There should be no assumption that anyone is available to you sexually.

What is Workplace Bullying?

Where an individual (or group) repeatedly behave unreasonably to another person (or group) which creates a risk to health & safety. This includes threats, intimidation, aggressive language or gestures, innuendo, demeaning language and isolation. Differences of opinion are fine, but repeated, unreasonable behaviour that has a negative impact on health & safety is not.

The important thing is how you feel, not whether the person causing it perceives or intends their actions to be offensive.

6 & 7: Your Rights ...

- To have a workplace free from discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- To raise issues, ask questions or make a complaint without being victimised.
- To have a friend or support person in the green room, and during a complaints process.

... and Your Responsibilities

- To understand our policy and comply
- To not harass, discriminate or bully
- To discourage others from harassment, discrimination and bullying
- To support anyone who is harassed or bullied.

8. Supporting Bystander Action

Be an active witness. If you see or hear something that makes you uncomfortable, don't ignore it, even if you are not the target. Use your voice to support others in a way that you feel safe and comfortable with; this could be intervening in the moment, offering support after the fact or reporting/providing a statement about the incident that occurred. Bystander intervention is important - because doing nothing does harm.

9. Consequences of Breaching this Policy

Disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment / cessation of engagement may be taken against people who breach this policy.

10. How to Make a Complaint

We have established a Safety Network of people you can talk to. A list of their names can be found on the full policy and procedure documents.

You can report a complaint and find out more about our Procedures for dealing with them via ([website to follow](#)). You can choose the kind of process you would like:

- a) Informal Feedback
- b) Informal Complaint
- c) Formal Complaint

You will be supported throughout the process by the NZ comedy industry.

Other places to go for help...

- If there is immediate danger, call 111.
- Reach out to a member of the comedy industry's Safety Network
- For information and support contact Safe To Talk Helpline: 0800 044 334 or text 4334
- For free counselling for our industry, go to musichelps.org.nz

¹ Defining Sexual Harm, Healthy Culture and Consent & Power Dynamics descriptions are taken from the *Playmarket Guideline Series - Working Together: Safety, Respect and Wellbeing*, and are used with the kind permission of Fiona McNamara and Playmarket.