

# The role of the Contact Officer

**Contact Officers** are staff who are trained to provide other staff with confidential information and support to resolve discrimination, harassment or bullying in the workplace.

**Contact Officers** are an important first contact for people who believe they have a grievance in the workplace. The grievance may relate to bullying, harassment, discrimination, or other workplace issues.

**Contact Officers** allow people to determine how they can best resolve their problem—either by tackling it themselves, making use of the workplace complaint procedure, or by some other means.

## Information and support

### **Contact Officers duties may involve:**

- Listening to the individual and acting as a support person
- Explaining and providing information about what constitutes discrimination and harassment
- Providing information about the options available to deal with the individual's concerns and the likely results of these
- Inform the individual of rights under Tasmanian and Federal equal opportunity law
- Discussing possible strategies the individual can use to deal directly with the other person
- Referring the individual to counselling and other support services if necessary
- Refer individuals who decide to make a formal complaint to the appropriate person for investigation
- Providing general information and copies of organisational equal opportunity policy and complaint procedure to any member of staff
- Promoting the role of the Contact Officer throughout the organisation

### **Contact Officers ensure that employees:**

- Have access to information about complaint resolution options within and outside the organisation
- Receive appropriate support to make informed decisions about how to resolve complaints

### **Contact Officers practice these important skills:**

- Respect
- Sensitivity
- Impartiality
- Active listening and good communication
- Empathy
- Commitment to fairness and a safe workplace
- Efficiency
- Commitment to the principles of Anti-Discrimination
- Confidentiality
- NoVictimisation

## Contact Officers are required to have knowledge of:

- Internal EEO/grievance policies and procedure of an organisation
- Strategies for dealing with and assisting in the resolution of grievances

These policies and procedures will outline exactly how complaints of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and bullying are dealt with in the particular workplace

### Note:

The Contact Officer's role is to provide information so that the individual can make a careful and informed decision that meets their needs

- It doesn't matter how many Contact Officers your organisation has if no-one knows they're there or what they're for!
- The Contact Officer is not employed to be a Contact Officer, it is an add-on role to their main job
- It is never appropriate for a Contact Officer to ignore a complaint
- Contact Officers provide information and support to ensure that conflict is a constructive process that leads to positive change in ways that respect the dignity of everyone involved
- It is completely the complainant's choice as to which option, or options, they take to resolve their complaint
- It is important that the Contact Officer does not take sides or try to act or speak for the complainant or the respondent

## Section 104

The Tasmanian *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998* (the Act) is pro-active, requiring managers and staff not to discriminate, sexually harass or victimise others.

Section 104 of the Act requires organisations to ensure that "... Members, officers, employees and agents are made aware of the discrimination and prohibited conduct to which the Act relates" and "no member, officer, employee or agent of the organisation engages in, repeats or continues such conduct".

Section 104 also requires an organisation to take reasonable steps to ensure that no member, officer, employee or agent of the organisation engages in discrimination or prohibited conduct.

Additionally the Act says that an organisation that does not comply with Section 104 is liable for any contravention of the Act committed by any of its members, officers, employees and agents.

Appointing Contact Officers and training them may be one of the ways to meet Section 104 obligations.

## Training

The Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner offers Contact Officer and Re-fresher Contact Officer training as well as Contact Officer networking meetings.

Training is designed to suit individuals and organisations, delivered in-house or on-site at your place of work.

Please call one of our training consultants: Roz Smart or Diana Ferguson to discuss your Anti-Discrimination training needs.

## Contact Us

To lodge a complaint or seek further information, contact the office or visit the website. Please note the office is unable to provide legal advice to parties of a complaint.

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[www.antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au](http://www.antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au)

Disclaimer: This information is intended to provide a general understanding of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1998.

Please advise the office prior to an appointment if you require special assistance or the services of an Interpreter /Auslan.