

# HARASSMENT POLICY

## **DEFINITION:**

Harassment involves the oppression through physical and or verbal abuse of a 'victim' by a bully, usually over a period of time. Harassment may also be of a sexual nature where a person is subjected to unsolicited and unwelcome sexual conduct. Harassment may be:

- Between co-workers
- Between student and student
- Between teacher and student
- Verbal or physical
- Implicit or explicit

## **RATIONALE:**

"In today's society then, adolescents need to develop skills in order to take responsibility for their own safety. Personal safety education is addressed throughout the curriculum responding to the underlying causes of violence and abuse. In some cases, teachers recognise too late the devastating effect that petty teasing, joking and bullying at school had had on their students. Educators must prevent a climate that allows bullying and harassment to flourish in their schools" (Hazler, 1994)

The St Joseph's College Mission Statement states in 'Our Shared Vision' - No. 10 - "Students will be treated fairly by staff and each other so that they feel valued and develop of strong sense of self-esteem" (page 7) and identifies that an aim of SJC is to "maintain and develop an environment where all individuals are valued, cared for and respected" (Pastoral Care - Aims -Page 10).

At SJC we acknowledge that harassment, in various forms may exist and that it is the responsibility of each individual to minimise the effect of physical, mental or sexual abuse.

All members of the school community can assist in the creation of an environment that is free of harassment by:

- Raising the awareness of the problem among colleagues and immediately discouraging its occurrence
- Avoiding intentional behaviours which could be regarded as harassment
- Offering support to all victims
- Giving serious consideration to the person's problem
- Reassuring, encouraging and assisting the person to indicate clearly to the harasser that behaviour is unwelcome and unacceptable
- Offering assistance in making a formal complaint

The N.S.W. Anti Discrimination Act (1997) and the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act (1984) not only cover all employees but also students 16 years and above. Children under this age are covered by the N.S.W. Child Protection Act (1987). Notification to the Department of Community Services is mandatory for all instances of sexual abuse and assault so that official action may be taken under the Child Protection Act (1987). This Act covers all persons under 18 years of age.

People who are harassed have a legal right to complain to the Anti Discrimination Board if they cannot solve the problem in the workplace and / or do not trust the workplace to solve it. If the complaint cannot be conciliated it may be taken to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal which will issue a legal judgement that must be followed.

## **GOALS:**

The foundation of this belief can be found in the rights and responsibilities advocated by the students of SJC and published in their College Diaries.

- RIGHT                                    - to feel safe, without being hindered by others, bullied or treated unfairly.
- RESPONSIBILITY                    - to recognise the dignity and rights of all people and to treat others with respect and in the principals of the College Mission Statement.

It is our intention to assist in every way possible to make each student at SJC feel safe.

It is every teacher's role to promote positive attitudes towards the rights of individuals to feel safe at school. The Pastoral Care team should ensure that the education of staff and students is an ongoing process.

All reports of bullying and harassment will be taken seriously and appropriate action implemented through the Pastoral Care structure at the College.

In the case of bullying, if a teacher deems the circumstances of the complaint to be serious enough the matter should be referred to the appropriate Year Coordinator. The Year Coordinator will investigate the incident, interview the student and / or teachers involved. The Year Coordinator, in consultation with the victim may then decide that the situation requires a victim and bully interview (see Appendix Handling the Victim/Bully Interview). A Bullying and Harassment Report would then be completed and placed on file. It is the responsibility of the Pastoral Care team to follow-up the progress of both bully and victim. If the Coordinator feels it necessary a Level and Discipline Card may be issued to monitor the students general behaviour.

If a student is reported for repeated bullying and harassment that student (after consultation with the Deputy Principal) may be suspended and parents asked to the College for an interview. These steps are in compliance with the SJC Welfare and Discipline Procedures.

NOTE:- Please refer to Appendix in Section 6 - 'Handling the Bully/Victim Interview' and the Bullying and Harassment Report.