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# CODE OF CONDUCT

FOR PROFESSIONAL PERFORMERS

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**equity**  
NEW ZEALAND

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Equity New Zealand is the professional association and trade union representing performers in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Equity New Zealand, its board and members, is committed to promoting safe workspaces for performers in the live performance area, in the screen production sector and in all areas of performance whether this is paid or unpaid work.

With this Code of Conduct we are encouraging performers to behave responsibly and to be a credit to our profession. This entails acting in good faith and showing respect for every person that they work alongside.

Performers, like all workers, are bound by the Health and Safety in Employment Act. This means that everyone is responsible for ensuring that work spaces are free from sexual harassment, discrimination or bullying.

The Code of Conduct is a living document and, as such, is subject to ongoing review. Equity welcomes suggestions for amendments - and acknowledges the need for continual examination of our industries' working practices and standards.

We believe that this Code is an opportunity for everyone to work towards a more collaborative, communicative and empowering workplace.

Performance is an art form. The work and process can and should be challenging, experimental, exploratory, and innovative. Artistic freedom of expression is essential. For these things to happen, though, the creative space must be a safe space. This means that everyone feels confident that they will not be exposed to emotional, cultural or physical harm.

And because the ways in which we work are broad – encompassing administration, auditions, rehearsals, technical work, late nights, parties, public-facing frontline work and in some cases working away from our home bases – and a great proportion of the arts sector workers are freelance, we must be extra vigilant about ensuring there is no space for problematic behaviour to exist.

# WHEN DOES THIS CODE APPLY?

This code applies to all performers. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Professional (paid) performers
- Student performers
- Volunteers, interns, and unpaid performers
- Drama teachers and coaches
- Intimacy Coordinators
- Stunt Coordinators

And it applies in all aspects of a performer's work, wherever that may take place, including (but not limited to):

- During auditions – including in the audition waiting room
- During workshops or devising kaupapa
- During rehearsals
- During production meetings
- During performances
- With interactions with an audience
- When working with other performers
- In relation to working with agents, casting directors, directors, producers and technical crew
- In relation to working with wardrobe, hair and makeup artists
- In relation to working with theatre or production administration and management staff
- In relation to working with young/child performers
- On tour
- At social events with other performers, including opening nights, wrap parties and sponsorship events
- On social media posts that are production-related

All performers have a responsibility for ensuring they treat their colleagues and contacts in the workplace with dignity and respect, and to be aware of the potential impact their behaviour has on others. With this code, Equity encourages all performers to call out inappropriate behaviour as soon as it arises. (See raising a complaint section below.)

The nature of performance involves an intense interaction with many creative individuals. This process can expose performers to vulnerable situations, particularly so in scenes depicting close physical intimacy, nudity, violence or verbal abuse. Equity recommends that such scenarios be thoroughly discussed well in advance as part of pre production and rehearsals, and where required, an intimacy coordinator, cultural safety advisor or other field expert, to be engaged as a production/team support mechanism.

The rehearsal and production process should always be one in which all team members are able to exercise their own agency at all times - and particularly if they are feeling unsafe.

# WHAT IS INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR?

## GENERAL CONDUCT

Harassment of any kind is about the abuse of power. Equity encourages performers to take responsibility for the power they have in the workplace, and not use it abusively over others who may be more vulnerable than themselves. In particular, Equity encourages performers to avoid any behaviour that marginalises or diminishes their colleagues and their mana.

Some general guidelines are:

- Colleagues should not be subject to negative commentary and/or stereotypes on: sexuality, gender identity, age, physical attributes or abilities, race or ethnicity, class, size, attractiveness, or personality characteristics, clothing or sexiness.
- Avoid being dismissive and rude.
- Making assumptions about gender, sexuality, race, class or religion of colleagues is disrespectful.
- Strive to use people's proper names, pronunciation and pronouns.
- Shaming or public outbursts are threatening and have absolutely no place in a performance environment.

## HARASSMENT

Harassment on the grounds of gender identity, marital status, family status, race, age, religion, size, sexual orientation or disability is defined as any unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

Unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

Examples of harassment might include:

- Verbal harassment – jokes, comments, ridicule or songs
- Written harassment – texts, messages, social media posts, emails, letters and notices
- Physical harassment – unnecessary touching, non-consensual touching or any form of assault

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is any form of non-consensual verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

This conduct is not limited by the gender(s) of the complainant and the alleged perpetrator(s). The non-consensual conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures, physical contact or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

### Examples of sexual harassment include:

- Unwelcome sexual gestures
- Unwanted displays of sexually suggestive objects including images, text messages or emails
- Unwelcome sexual comments and jokes
- Unwelcome physical contact such as pinching and groping. Or more benign touching that is unnecessary or it has been communicated is unwanted.
- Physical force, or threat of force, for sexual objective
- Threat of disadvantage for rejection of advances
- Promise of advantage for sexual concessions

## BULLYING

Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical, online or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another, or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment which could reasonably be regarded as undermining of the individual's right to dignity at work.

Bullying is deliberate and intentional. It is usually not a one-off incident, but is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated over time.

Many types of conduct and actions can constitute bullying with some being less obvious than others. Bullying can consist of persistent offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour carried out by any individual or group against another person, either directly or indirectly, which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable.

**By way of example only, a pattern of any of the following (non-exhaustive) types of conduct amount to bullying:**

- Sharing content about co-workers online that is derogatory and/or shaming
- Personal insults and name calling
- Persistent unjustified criticism and/or sarcasm
- Public or private humiliation
- Shouting at colleagues in public and/or private
- Instantaneous rage, often over trivial issues or genuine mistakes
- Unfair or unrealistic delegation of duties and responsibilities
- Aggression
- Making offensive comments about a co-worker
- Not giving credit for work contributions and ideas
- Intimidation and threats in general
- Physical & emotional abuse
- Spying or stalking
- Pressuring someone to drop a complaint

Bullying can have a physiological, psychological and behavioural impact on an individual. Victims can lose their self-esteem and self-confidence and are at increased risk of suffering stress-related conditions that can trigger further trauma. Apart from the direct impact on a victim's health, long-term exposure to bullying may also have consequences for the victim's livelihood, through absenteeism and resignation from work in order to avoid contact with the bully.

## STEPS TO TAKE WHERE HARASSMENT HAS OCCURRED

Anyone who is asked to stop any harassing behaviour should comply immediately.

If you are being harassed, or witness inappropriate behaviour, speak out about it. Seek support for yourself or offer support to the person harmed. If you feel comfortable to do so, call out the inappropriate behaviour immediately. You might find it helpful to use this type of language: "That is not appropriate – it makes me feel uncomfortable". Or you can raise it at a later time.

The "bystander effect" is all too common - a culture of silence perpetuates harm.

If the behaviour is not rectified immediately, or if you do not feel comfortable addressing the perpetrator directly, contact someone in the production company or contact the Equity office as soon as you can.

## MAKING A COMPLAINT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Every workplace should have policies to deal with sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying. If you experience or witness sexual harassment in any performance setting you have a right to speak up and, if appropriate, to make a formal complaint. Equity can support you with this.

Who you report an incident of sexual harassment to may differ on each production. It could be a dedicated Human Resource(HR) person, stage manager, Intimacy Coordinator, Safety Officer, Assistant Director(AD), Head of Department (HOD), or producer.

Arrange a time to talk to that person privately. You have the right to bring a person for support if you need one.

**If you decide to make a complaint then you should expect the following to happen:**

- The complaint should be taken seriously by the production company or organisation where you are performing.
- Your complaint should be documented regardless of whether or not a formal investigation is conducted.
- There is an obligation on the production company or organisation to discuss with you the steps to be taken to ensure your safety.

- Your complaint should be addressed in a fair, timely, and confidential manner. If a serious crime has occurred there is an obligation to report it to the police.
- You should be given information by the production company or organisation about what complaint procedures are available to you. These may be formal or informal processes.
- The production company or organisation should follow the complaints procedure you elect, and you should be allowed to have a support person with you throughout the process.
- Only you, and those people who need to know in order for the complaint to be properly and fairly investigated, should be provided information about your complaint.
- In the case of a formal complaint, the person you have made the complaint against should be notified and given an opportunity to respond.
- If a person is found to have sexually harassed you there should be clear consequences for their actions.
- By law you are protected from being adversely affected as a result of making a complaint of sexual harassment.

## SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

**Equity Office:** (09) 360 1980; 0800334470

**Police / Emergency services:** Call 111 (emergency) or 105 (non-urgent)

**Safe to Talk** - 0800 044 334 Text 4334 24 hour support

**Help** - 0800 623 1700 (support for sexual abuse survivors)

**Rape Prevention Trust** - (for services throughout Aotearoa)

**Mental health helpline** - Text 1737 (support from trained mental health professionals)

**Youthline** - 0800 376 633 or text 234

**WorkSafe** - advice for bullying & sexual harassment

ACC's **Find Support** service for those who have experienced sexual harassment:

**Human Rights Commission** - (to make an enquiry or complaint about discrimination or racial or sexual harassment) : 0800 4 YOUR RIGHTS (0800 496 877) or email [infoline@hrc.co.nz](mailto:infoline@hrc.co.nz)

**Healthline** - 0800 611 116 (support from registered nurses)

Code of conduct endorsed by Equity New Zealand board 13/12/2021