

WOMEN IN FOCUS

Breaking the silence

Know your rights on sexual discrimination

BY **ROBIN TRIMINGHAM** - MARCH 9, 2026

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In a male-dominated workplace, reporting sexism can sometimes feel like a risk that might jeopardise your career progress.

Employment attorney Juliana Snelling, director at Canterbury Law Limited, provided some advice on this difficult subject.

Sexism versus sex discrimination

“Sexism refers to beliefs, attitudes or biases which are objectionable but not illegal,” Ms Snelling said.

“For example, the belief that all women are best suited to staying home and looking after babies or that men should not show emotions.

“In contrast, sex or gender discrimination is the illegal action or outcome that results from sexist beliefs.”

Examples of breaking the Human Rights Act include paying women less than men to do the same job with the same qualifications; or refusing to hire or promote a person because she is female.

Ms Snelling added: “Gender (sex) is a protected characteristic under the Act and therefore it is illegal to discriminate or harass someone in the workplace based on gender.

“The Act provides that no employee may be harassed in the workplace by their employer or by another employee, based on their gender.”

The Act also provides that harassment takes place when a person persistently engages in comment or conduct towards another person which is vexatious and which he knows, or should know, is unwelcome.

Ms Snelling said some women worry that reporting sexism could harm their career progression.

“This is a real concern for some women,” Ms Snelling said.

“Their conundrum is whether they report sexism for fear that this may lead to retaliation because they are dubbed a troublemaker.”

Bullying and sexual harassment

Since 2021, all employers in Bermuda must give their employees a written statement of employment with details about the existence of the employer's written policy against bullying and sexual harassment and how to access the policy.

"In addition, they must have a clear written policy against bullying and sexual harassment, the policy must be presented to each employee on the commencement of their employment; and employees must be trained on understanding the policy," Ms Snelling said.

The Ministry of Labour can provide a template policy statement on comprehensive bullying and sexual harassment.

Legal advice

"If an employee resigns because the workplace feels intolerable, that is called a constructive dismissal," Ms Snelling said.

"It is extremely important to seek legal advice before resigning on this ground because the employer will often immediately cut the employee off of any further pay and benefits, as well as assert that the employee has breached their contractual duty to give notice of termination and thus threaten to sue the employee for breach of contract."

But what if you think your experience "isn't bad enough" to justify reporting?

Ms Snelling advised: "Keep a detailed diary of all the negative experiences, including who said or did what, on what date, where, and in whose presence and, if the offensive comment was in writing, print the document and take it home.

"Be sure to build a good solid case before you take the drastic step of declaring constructive dismissal or filing a complaint against the employer which could negatively affect your career."

She said you should have the courage to tell the person that you are not OK with their comments or actions.

Make your message firm and respectful such as: “That went too far. I am asking that you never say or do that again to me.”

Record that you asked the person to stop and record their response.

“You can then take your diary to a lawyer to see if you have a case for constructive dismissal if the situation does not improve,” Ms Snelling said.



Robin Trimmingham

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