

Dear Victorian Law Reform,

Re: Stalking and harassment is a regular occurrence within supermarkets.

Managing Customer Service, during nights, in a supermarket, I have seen many situations which involve stalking and harassment.

I have been supervising female team members who have been stalked both in and out of work by customers.

I have witnessed customers being stalked within and out the front of the supermarket.

I have personally experienced being stalked and harassed whilst at work many times.

I have raised these extremely stressful circumstances with the police and also within internal management.

Sometimes these matters resulted in customers being banned. Other times the police couldn't do much. Often management hasn't taken the complaints seriously.

Some security guards have been helpful with circumstances involving stalking; others have added to the problem. I had to get a security guard removed from his position. Once I told the security guard he had to stay until the end of the shift (he was trying to leave early) and I explained that I had been threatened at night whilst closing down the store. He then argued with me and the conversation grew to a point where he turned and verbally harassed me and threatened I would be stalked going home.

One time a customer was so scared to leave the store because she had been stalked on her way to shop. After hiding in the store for hours, the police didn't have enough officers to come and we had to close. One of the female team members was getting picked up by her husband and they kindly offered to drive the customer safely home.

One customer, who I just verbally banned (not with any legal paperwork), has now found one of the female team members on Facebook and is stalking her online, as well as pacing out the front of the store. This same customer followed another female team member outside of work and tried to follow her home multiple times.

I only saw this submission opportunity tonight, so I haven't had time to research how to do an appropriate submission. However, I feel that it is important to express how stalking and harassment is a reoccurring danger in supermarkets both towards team members and customers. The way to prevent, manage and stop such stalking and harassment is not clear.

I have also been harassed by a store manager before. I followed the internal complaint method. I was told he would be fired but found out by the union rep that they just moved him to another store.

It is extremely difficult to work out the best way to make the female team members safe when the people and methods/systems in place don't do enough to prevent stalking and harassment.

Just down ██████████ a female was stalked and killed on her way home from her job at night. Then in the other direction, on the same tram line, a female was raped and killed returning home from work also.

I was stalked on the train twice by different male strangers and got off at different stops and changed trains to try and get away from them on my way home from work. I called the police but they didn't do anything about it.

I am willing to provide further details about any of the above situations if required and if helpful. I also have other circumstances that I have witnessed and that happened to customers, my team members and or myself.

I worry about the safety of the female team members I supervise and the customers. I have had to yell at higher management on multiple occasions, sometimes in front of customers, to take the complaints seriously (after first professionally raising complaints both in writing and talking about the situations with no outcomes). I have been told by (male) managers that "she should just not go and skate there" when I explained how one of the female team had been stalked by a customer when she was skating at a local park and then followed as she walked home.

I have been told "not to worry, that the customer just must fancy you and won't really hurt you", when I told higher management that a customer had verbally threatened me and ripped open his shirt showing his gang tattoo. Another time he stood outside the window, right where I was serving, and just stared at me then came inside and walked right up to me and stood there staring. Another time again he verbally swore at me and stood over me. In the end, after months of the treatment getting worse, and then when a customer with a child was also intimidated, the manager finally put in an official report to the police and the stalking customer went to court. We were told he went to jail. However, he was shortly after released and came back to the store.

I am most concerned about the stalker who is now bothering several of the female team members in and out of work, in person and now online. I have been off work injured, so haven't been at work to be able to follow up and push the higher managers to do something about it. One of the females told me about it on the phone and I gave her the police officers details who I spoke to in the past regarding another stalking and harassment situation.

Kind Regards

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