



The Law Society
OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Mock Law Program

Script Writer's Guide

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1. Introduction

The Law Society of NSW Mock Law Program consists of the Mock Trial and Mock Mediation competitions.

Both competitions provide high school students from across NSW with a greater understanding of the workings of the NSW judicial system and alternative dispute resolution, and the opportunity to develop key professional and personal skills such as advocacy, problem-solving, active listening and teamwork.

The competitions rely heavily on the support and involvement of volunteer members of the profession, who contribute as Mock Trial Magistrates, Mock Mediation Adjudicators, and script writers for the Program.

2. Mock Trial

Running since 1981, the Mock Trial Competition is the Law Society's flagship high school initiative.

Over eight rounds, schools across NSW are paired together to act out a true-to-life criminal or civil trial using a fictional legal scenario. Each pairing is also allocated to a volunteer Magistrate who presides over the trial, delivers judgement and provides feedback.

For each round, the competition alternates between civil and criminal matters and provides schools with the opportunity to act as both the Prosecution/Plaintiff team and the Defence team.

Whilst each team will receive a separate version of the script depending on their party allocation, all scripts follow the same format and include

- Legal notes
 - This includes key legislation
- Cases
 - 2-3 relevant and leading cases for the subject matter. These do not necessarily have to be specific to the facts of the case, but can relate to specific elements e.g. intention or chain of causation
- Court Attendance Notice (if a criminal matter) or Statement of Claim and Defence (if a civil matter)
- Witness statements (x2 for each party)

Students are not permitted to use or refer to any materials, legislation, or case law outside that provided in the script, so it is important that key and leading precedents are provided where possible.

Witness statements:

- There are to be two witness statements for each party
- Statements should be no more than one page each
- Character names should be gender neutral where possible
- Statements can be from anyone who would normally be a witness for a situation, however it is suggested that expert witnesses, e.g. medical/forensic experts, are avoided so as not to make the scenario overly complex
- Statements should allow for potential objections (relevance, opinion, hearsay, bad character, not using direct speech), so that students can demonstrate their knowledge and skills

Key considerations:

- Scenarios should be appropriate for high school students
- Matters shouldn't be overly complicated – the level of difficulty should be achievable for high school students

For further information about the competition, please refer to the Competition Manual and other resources on the [Competition webpage](#).

Included in the Appendix is a script template and example script.

3. Mock Mediation

The Mock Mediation Competition is a structured problem-solving process designed to encourage students acting as mediators to identify the issues in dispute, consider options and work towards a mutual agreement that meets the needs of all parties.

The Competition consists of six rounds. For each round, schools are provided with a scenario depicting a fictional dispute between four characters who serve as the parties in the mediation (Party A1, A2, B1, and B2). The scenario is divided into:

- Background
- Incident
- Aftermath

In addition to the scenario, each round has an accompanying set of confidential facts. These are additional information relevant to each party that may affect their actions throughout the mediation process. These are only to be provided at the start of the mediation itself, where each party will receive their individual facts, and have ten minutes of reading time before commencing the mediation. The intention is to add another layer of complexity to the scenario and provide the mediators with an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and potentially uncover additional information relevant to the dispute.

Key considerations:

- Scenarios should be appropriate for high school students
- Disputes should separate parties into two opposing groups (Party A1 and A2, and Party B1 and B2)
- Scenario should be no more than four pages total
- Confidential facts should be no more than one page per Party

For further information about the competition, please refer to the Competition Manual and other resources on the [Competition webpage](#).

Included in the Appendix is a scenario template and an example scenario.



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[Mock Trial script template]

2026 Mock Trial Competition

Round xxx

Magistrate's Script

Index

This is a criminal/civil matter in which the defendant, xxx, has been charged under section xxx of the xxx (Act) with xxx (offence).

Prosecution team materials:

1. Legal Notes
2. Cases
3. Court Attendance Notice/Statement of Claim
4. Statement of Prosecution witness 1
5. Statement of Prosecution witness 2

Defence team materials:

1. Legal Notes
2. Cases
3. Court Attendance Notice/Defence Statement of Claim
4. Statement of Defence witness 1
5. Statement of Defence witness 2

Legal notes

[brief sentence about offence]

[relevant legislation]

Cases

[case 1] Citation

[brief description of case and relevance]

[case 2] Citation

[brief description of case and relevance]

[case 3] Citation

[brief description of case and relevance]

Court Attendance Notice/Statement of Claim

Defence Statement of Claim

Prosecution/Plaintiff statement: [name]

1. My name is.....
2. I am.....
3. .
4. .
5. .
6. .
7. .
8. .
9. .
10. .
11. .
12. .
13. .
14. .
15. .
16. .
17. .
18. .

Prosecution/Plaintiff statement: [name]

1. My name is.....
2. I am.....
3. .
4. .
5. .
6. .
7. .
8. .
9. .
10. .
11. .
12. .
13. .
14. .
15. .
16. .
17. .
18. .

Defence statement: [name]

1. My name is.....
2. I am.....
3. .
4. .
5. .
6. .
7. .
8. .
9. .
10. .
11. .
12. .
13. .
14. .
15. .
16. .
17. .
18. .

Defence statement: [name]

1. My name is.....
2. I am.....
3. .
4. .
5. .
6. .
7. .
8. .
9. .
10. .
11. .
12. .
13. .
14. .
15. .
16. .
17. .
18. .



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[Example script]

2026 Mock Trial Competition

Round Two

Magistrate's Script

Index

This is a criminal matter in which the defendant, Hector Dunning, has been charged under section 42(1) & (3) of the Road Transport (Safety & Traffic Management) Act (**Act**) with negligent, furious or reckless driving (**Offence**).

Prosecution team materials:

1. Legal Notes
2. Cases
3. Court Attendance Notice
4. Statement of Constable Will Bentley (Prosecution witness 1)
5. Statement of Constable Hope Raine (Prosecution witness 2)

Defence team materials:

1. Legal Notes
2. Cases
3. Court Attendance Notice
4. Statement of Hector Dunning (Defence witness 1)
5. Statement of Kari Buchanan (Defence witness 2)

Legal notes

The Defendant has been charged under the Road Transport (Safety & Traffic Management) Act Section 42 (1) & (3).

Negligent, furious or reckless driving

(1) A person must not drive a motor vehicle negligently on a road or road related area.

Maximum penalty:

- a) if the driving occasions death—30 penalty units or imprisonment for 18 months or both (in the case of a first offence) or 50 penalty units or imprisonment for 2 years or both (in the case of a second or subsequent offence), or;
- b) if the driving occasions grievous bodily harm—20 penalty units or imprisonment for 9 months or both (in the case of a first offence) or 30 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months or both (in the case of a second or subsequent offence), or;
- c) if the driving does not occasion death or grievous bodily harm—10 penalty units.

(3) In considering whether an offence has been committed under this section, the court is to have regard to all the circumstances of the case, including the following:

- a) the nature, condition and use of the road or road related area on which the offence is alleged to have been committed,
- b) the amount of traffic that actually is at the time, or which might reasonably be expected to be, on the road or road related area.

The Prosecution carries the onus of satisfying the Court beyond reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty of the offence alleged.

The Defence should endeavour to show that the Defendant acted appropriately in all the circumstances.

Cases

Wintulich v Lenthall [1932] SASR 60

Per Murray, CJ in relation to the South Australian legislation equivalent to Section 42 of the NSW Road Transport (Safety & Traffic Management) Act 1999

"...The standard of care required is that which an ordinary prudent man would deem necessary in the circumstances presented to him, in order to avoid injuring or causing damage to the person or property of others while using a street or road. The negligence need not be shown to be either wilful or intentional."

Radburn v Kemp [1971] All E.R. 249

"At 6.30 on a murky, rainy evening, at a five-way junction controlled by traffic lights, the plaintiff, a pedal cyclist, who was about two-thirds of the way across the junction, was struck by a car driven by the defendant which had emerged from the road on the plaintiff's left as soon as the lights had changed. It was within the knowledge of the plaintiff that the traffic lights did not give a cyclist a good opportunity to get across the road junction before the lights changed. The judge held that it was, therefore, the plaintiff's duty to keep a look-out to see that, towards the end of his journey across the junction, he did not come into collision with any vehicle that was rightly entering that road junction after a change in the lights. The judge found that there was no excuse whatever for the plaintiff not seeing the car which hit him; and that, had the plaintiff been on the look-out, and so seen the motor car, it was not improbable that he would have been able to take action which would have avoided the collision.

Davies, Edmund Davies & Buckley LJJ, said *"Held - a driver had no absolute right to enter a road junction when and merely because the lights had turned in his favour; he was bound to ensure that it was safe for him to do so, and, once he had entered it, he had no right to proceed further across the junction without taking the utmost care to save harmless people who were already on the junction before he entered it;"*

Gaynor v Allen [1959] 2 Q.B. 403

At about 7.20 p.m., some 20 minutes after lighting-up time, the plaintiff, while crossing a road subject to a 40-mile an hour speed limit, was knocked down by a police motor-cyclist driving at 60 miles an hour in the course of his duties. The policeman was killed and the plaintiff claimed damages for personal injuries against his administratrix, alleging negligence. In view of section 3 of the Road Traffic Act, 1934, the policeman was exempted from observing the speed limit and it was submitted on behalf of the defendant, who envied negligence, that the fact that the policeman was driving at 60 miles an hour on a restricted road did not prima facie show negligence:-

Per Nair, J said, *"Held, that in respect of his civil liability the police motor cyclist was in exactly the same position as any "civilian" driver, and on the occasion in question owed the same duty to the public to drive with due care and attention and without exposing members of the public to unnecessary danger;"*

Pursuant to Motor Traffic Act 4A(7) the driver of a motor vehicle conveying members of the Police Force on urgent duty may exceed the applicable speed limit provided that the driver 'gives the best practicable warning to enable way to be made for the vehicle.

Court Attendance Notice

Details of Defendant

Name: Hector Dunning

Address: 69 George Street, Parramatta

Date of Birth: 05.08.1990

Details of Prosecutor

Prosecutor: Senior Constable S Schroder

Address: 273 Pacific Highway, St Leonards 2065

Phone: 02 9956 3199

Apprehended on: 1 November 2018 at 9.30pm

Details of Offence

Road Transport (Safety & Traffic Management) Act Section 42 (1) & (3)

That Hector Dunning on 1 November 2018 at Parramatta in the State of New South Wales, did drive a motor vehicle upon a public street to wit Victoria Road, Parramatta, negligently.

Prosecution statement: Constable Will Bentley

1. My name is Constable Will/Wilma Bentley, and I have been in the Police Force for 20 years.
2. On 1 November 2018, I was assigned to Highway Patrol duties with Constable Raine. At about 9pm, we were patrolling the area north of Victoria Road when we received a call that a robbery was in progress at Diamonds Galore at Parramatta.
3. When we received the call, we were approximately two blocks north of the intersection of Church Victoria Road. After receiving the call, Constable Raine activated the siren and flashing lights of the vehicle and accelerated the vehicle in the direction of the Jewelers.
4. As I approached the traffic control lights at the intersection of Church Street and Victoria Road, the lights changed from amber to red. In view of the likelihood of persons' lives being threatened by the robbery, I decided to drive through the intersection.
5. Before doing so I slowed the vehicle somewhat and checked for traffic before entering the intersection. The traffic was light, and as the intersection seemed clear, I started to accelerate. As I did so, I saw for the first time a car on my right-hand side travelling in the curbside lane.
6. The car appeared to be travelling quite quickly, and I was unable to avoid a collision. The front of my vehicle collided with the rear passenger door of the car.
7. Thereafter, I approached the driver of the car, who was accompanied by a passenger in the rear seat of the vehicle. I had the following conversation with the driver:
8. I said, "Didn't you see us coming?" The driver said, "Yes, I saw you coming."
9. I said, "Well, didn't you see the flashing lights?" They said "You never had any flashing lights on." I said, "Well, you must have heard the siren."
10. They said, "Look, the Uber app was on giving instructions for jobs. I didn't hear any siren, besides you went through a red light!"
11. I said, "We are going to book you for negligent driving."
12. They said, "You go ahead - I'll fight you all the way, you coppers think you own the road just because you wear a uniform."
13. The Defendant was then taken to Parramatta Police Station and charged.

Prosecution statement: Constable Hope Raine

1. My name is Constable Hope Raine, and I've been with the Parramatta Police for 5 years.
2. On 1 November 2018, I was assigned to Highway Patrol duties with Constable Bentley. At about 9pm on that day, we were patrolling the area north of Victoria Road when we received a call that a robbery was in progress at Diamonds Galore at Parramatta.
3. When we received the call, we were approximately two blocks north of the intersection of Victoria Road and Church Street.
4. After receiving the call, I activated the siren and the lights on top of the car.
5. My partner accelerated the vehicle but slowed as we approached the intersection of Victoria Road and Church Street. As we entered the intersection, the lights facing us were red, and I recall looking to the left and seeing no traffic.
6. As we entered the intersection, a car appeared on the right-hand side and collided with our vehicle.
7. The front of our vehicle was struck by the rear passenger side of the car.
8. I was a bit dazed, but I recall my partner went and spoke to the driver of the car, and a heated discussion appeared to follow.
9. The ambulance was called to assist the passenger in the car, and treatment at the scene was subsequently given by ambulance officers.
10. After the accident, I assisted in performing some repair work on the patrol car. That work included replacing the lights on the top of the vehicle as the globes were found to be broken.

Defence statement: Hector Dunning

1. My name is Hector Dunning, and I live at 69 George Street, Parramatta.
2. I am a Dental Assistant and have been an Uber driver for the past 2 years.
3. I like working for Uber, as it allows me to make extra money on the side and I have interesting conversations with my passengers.
4. On 1 November 2018, I picked up a passenger from Parramatta Police Station and was driving them to Ryde in an easterly direction. I think they were sitting in the back on the passenger's side.
5. I was going about 55 kilometres per hour down Victoria Road, and the traffic lights facing me were green.
6. I had the windows up, and as I had a long way to go before dropping off my passenger, I had turned the car radio down so as not to annoy them.
7. The passenger had said a few words to me as they got in, but as we entered Victoria Road and approached Church Street, they were not talking.
8. As I said, the lights were green, I had my headlights on, and I could see other vehicles near and in the intersection, but none of them was doing anything out of the ordinary. There was at least one vehicle stopped at the lights at my left at Church Street. I think the vehicle was a white campervan.
9. I was halfway across the intersection when suddenly a car, which was going south on Church Street, accelerated into the intersection and rammed into the back left-hand side of my car. I still had the green light, so I was pretty surprised.
10. My passenger was thrown around in the seat. They didn't have their seatbelt on as they had a bad back and got a cut on the head. A Police Officer came to my window, which I wound down to speak with them.
11. They said, "You nearly killed us you idiot, didn't you hear the siren?"
12. I said, "No, you didn't have the siren on." They said, "Didn't you see our lights?" I said, "I saw a 'Police' sign but no flashing lights." They said, "We're going to book you for negligent driving.
13. I said, "I wasn't driving negligently, you went through a red light". I was then taken to Parramatta Police Station and charged with negligent driving.

Defence statement: Kari Buchanan

1. My name is Kari Buchanan. I live at 25 Addison Road, Ryde, and I am a retired Veterinarian.
2. On the night of Thursday, 1 November 2018, I had been to Parramatta Police Station to report the theft of my hearing aid. I was going to take the bus back home, but decided to catch an Uber instead, as I have a bad back and bus seats are uncomfortable.
3. When the Uber arrived, I sat in the back of the car, and we drove off towards Ryde. We were not going very quickly, about 50 kilometres per hour, I suppose. The driver turned down the music and closed the windows, which I was grateful for as I was tired after a long day.
4. When we came to an intersection, a Police car hit us, and I was thrown around in the car and cut the top of my head when it collided with the back of the seat. I didn't see the police car at all before it hit the Uber.
5. The Police Officer came over to us and talked to the driver through their window, which was open, and I could see that the police officer was upset when he approached.
6. The Police Officer was very angry and rude. The driver was really surprised by the Officer's rudeness, and it seemed the officer was threatening him, calling him an idiot and refusing to listen to him at all.
7. I didn't hear any siren or see any flashing light. When I looked at the police car after the accident, I remember seeing that all its lights were off.
8. The other Police Officer called an ambulance, and they attended to my head. I was also treated for shock, as I was shaking quite badly from the fright of it all.
9. If there was a siren, the driver might not have heard it because of the car radio, which was on but very softly. Police sirens are so loud that it would have been very easy to hear them over the music, even if it was at full volume.



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[Mock Mediation Template]

2026 Mock Mediation Competition

Round xxx

Scenario / Confidential Facts

Background

Incident

Aftermath

Confidential Facts: Party A1

Confidential Facts: Party A2

Confidential Facts: Party B1

Confidential Facts: Party B2



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OF NEW SOUTH WALES

[Example scenario]

2026 Mock Mediation Competition

Round Two

Scenario

Background

Gemma, Tony, Sally and Eva all work for *Kwik Kopy* - a stationery company that uses social media for its advertising and sales. Tony has been there for over two years and has always gotten on very well with her colleagues. Eva has been there for eighteen months and works closely with Tony - Tony even helped teach Eva how to do a lot of things, before Tony moved into a new role in the office.

In a small world story, both Gemma and Sally moved from Lichtenstein and got a job at *Kwik Kopy* - even though they hadn't known each other beforehand.

They all sit next to each other in adjoining cubicles and work closely on many projects, but each also has their own individual work to do. They share tips on where the best coffee is on sale and let each other know when there are cool events on after work - it's always fun to go in a group and there is so much to talk about.

Gemma and Tony have gotten very close outside of work - they live near to one another, so they attend gym classes together and walk to and from work every day.

Sally and Eva have also become best friends, even starting a friendly competition with the work social media pages to see who can get the most "likes" for the company.

All four of them love to talk, but Sally and Eva talk the most, chatting incessantly while they work with one another.

Gemma has never worked in a noisy workplace before - all their previous jobs were in very quiet offices. So, Gemma has found it very difficult to concentrate on the task at hand, especially when it requires close attention to detail. A lot of the time, Gemma feels she has to stop working or she makes mistakes, and it is getting really frustrating because she is worried about falling behind.

Both Gemma and Sally are still in their probationary periods, so they are very concerned about ensuring their work is of excellent quality. However, Sally doesn't have any problem with multitasking, and social media is one of her responsibilities.

Gemma went to speak to the team's manager, asking if she could please be moved from the cubicles into one of the offices. But the team has grown so much that there aren't any offices to spare at the moment. Not to mention, the manager doesn't think it would be fair to give one person an office even though everyone in the team is on an equal level.

Gemma has been getting increasingly annoyed with the background noise and is stressed about the work that has to get done. They have been coming in early and working through lunch to minimise distractions, but now the stress is making Gemma lose concentration just as much as the noise. Tony noticed this and tried to talk to Gemma about it to make sure everything was ok. Gemma told Tony that she can't work when there is noise, so Tony has withdrawn from group conversations and has made an effort to go into the tearoom or a meeting room when she wants to discuss something with someone.

Sally and Eva didn't know what was going on - they've always worked in collaborative industries and are used to getting lots done in noisy environments, so they continued to talk. Eva, like Sally, hadn't noticed Gemma's frustration; having worked at *Kwik Kopy* for so long, she is used to the noise.

Incident

One day, Sally overheard Gemma talking to Tony about how annoying Sally and Eva are - and Tony was agreeing. Gemma and Tony called Sally and Eva childish and questioned whether the content of their work was really any good and up to the quality that Kwik Kopy should be producing. Sally told Eva, who got very upset and wondered why Gemma or Tony hadn't said anything to them.

Both Sally and Eva tried to keep the conversation to a minimum after that, discussing only work matters they were both involved in or wanted professional opinions on. Gemma was getting really frustrated and started whispering mean things about how ridiculous they were over the cubicle divider to Tony - right in front of Sally and Eva.

Eva had had enough, and when Gemma was in a meeting a little while later, Eva turned to Sally, saying, "Did you hear that?!" Sally had heard, and they were both really offended, saying that it was unprofessional to talk about someone right in front of them, especially when it involved name-calling, and that Gemma couldn't expect all workplaces to be the same as the places she had worked in the past.

Tony was in their cubicle alongside Eva's and Sally's and could hear the discussion between the two. They felt like Gemma should know that the others were upset about what was happening. When Tony told Gemma, Gemma became furious, storming off to the manager and demanding that Sally and Eva be reprimanded for their behaviour. Gemma even suggested that they should be fired for racism, claiming they had said Gemma should "go back where she came from" which made her so stressed about work, she became physically ill.

Aftermath

Sally and Eva were called into the manager's office and asked to explain the situation. Both of whom explained that Gemma had started gossiping about them behind their backs and in front of them, and that Tony had overheard exactly what Sally and Eva had said. They'd been comfortable saying it out loud because they both felt there was nothing to hide. Plus, Eva had worked with Tony for a considerable amount of time so felt that Tony would understand the situation.

The manager spoke to Gemma and Tony separately and tried to clarify a few things, saying they are sure it is all a misunderstanding, but Gemma says she is so stressed about having been bullied that she can't be seated near Sally and Eva anymore and that they should be punished.

Sally and Eva are in shock and can't believe this is happening, as the four of them used to be such good friends.

Sally and Gemma also have in mind that they are both in their probationary periods; the seriousness of the situation isn't the kind of record they want on their staff report card, or worse, something that sees them lose their jobs.

But no one agrees, and no one will back down.

The manager doesn't want to have to fire anyone or move the department around again, so they have sent all four team members to mediation to get the issue resolved as quickly and smoothly as possible



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[Example Confidential Facts]

2026 Mock Mediation Competition

Round Two

Confidential Facts

Confidential Facts – Party A1, Gemma

You are shocked and appalled at the behaviour of some people! First of all, they were incredibly selfish in always talking - surely they must have realised that other people aren't interested in their inane conversation and wanted to actually concentrate on their work.

Secondly, they are so childish! Social Media competitions - are you kidding? Get a real job.

But you are also incredibly hurt. You feel like you have been bullied into submission. They haven't been quiet for you, and then to insinuate you should go back to your old job, which is overseas, that's tantamount to racism. I am 99 per cent sure I heard them both say "go back to where you came from"! That's awful behaviour, and you won't stand for it.

Deep down, as much as you would like to see them fired, you know it isn't likely to happen. The manager seems to like them and says their work is good for the direction of the company. But they have to admit to what they said and apologise for it. And agree to change - you can't keep working near them while they are so noisy.

You feel like they have bullied you into submission because there are two of them.

Confidential Facts – Party A2, Tony

You are surprised that the situation has escalated this far, yet also relieved. When Gemma told you she was having trouble getting work done with the amount of noise, you were secretly really pleased. You've never enjoyed working in a noisy environment, but you just did your best to get on with the status quo. Recently, though, you had a less-than-satisfactory performance review, and you know it is because you haven't been able to focus.

You also think it was unprofessional of Sally and Eva to let the situation get so out of hand, if they knew Gemma wasn't happy, they should have changed. And they should have spoken to Gemma about it, instead of about Gemma. Surely Eva should have caught on that the dynamic had changed since the old days when it was just you two. However, the things they were saying were not nice either, although you didn't hear them explicitly say anything racist.

You are concerned about the effect this is having on the team, you like Gemma and don't want to see her leave the job - which you know is a risk to the whole team if the situation isn't resolved. You think Gemma went about it the right way, it is Sally and Eva who should realise they need to be quieter, especially when they found out that it was affecting their teammate. And you want them to be quieter too!

Confidential Facts – Party B1, Sally

You are completely taken aback. How have things escalated so quickly?

All four of you were so happy working together, and now you are being accused of racism and bullying - and it is putting your job at risk. You are still inside your probationary period and are very concerned that you could lose your job, and that would put a lot of pressure on you outside of work as well.

You have only just moved over from Lichtenstein, and losing your job might mean having to move back. So, you definitely want to get this resolved as soon as possible.

You refuse to apologise for racism though - that is a blatant lie. How on earth could she have interpreted us as being racist? It is ridiculous, given that you are from Lichtenstein too. You have no idea how Gemma could have made that up without feeling ashamed of herself. As far as you are concerned, Gemma is deliberately trying to get you into trouble - all because of some background noise at work!

You're quite annoyed that Gemma didn't approach you and Eva directly and discuss the issue. You found out by overhearing her complain about you. That's so immature and unprofessional. Gemma should apologise for not behaving like an adult at work and coming to you both to explain she was struggling. You would have been more helpful then, and things wouldn't have gotten so far.

Confidential Facts – Party B2, Eva

You are disgusted by Gemma. What a liar! And the content of the lie puts your reputation and Sally's job at risk. It is unacceptable that she can get away with making something like that up. You know you were complaining about her - but that's because she was talking about you behind your back at work. That's so unprofessional - and a really rude thing to do. Every mature adult knows that if you have an issue with someone, you should go to them directly.

As it was, you found out because Sally overheard both Gemma and Tony gossiping about you. And despite that, you did cut conversation to a minimum just to help them. What kind of a thank you is making up lies?

Gemma should apologise to you for getting you all into this situation, and for not coming to you directly like a mature adult. You're happy to have group work discussions in a meeting room, but you won't promise to stop talking altogether. You spend more time at work than at home - that would be completely unreasonable and make 9-5 feel like a prison cell.