

WORKPLACE BULLYING



WHAT IS BULLYING?

Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards an employee or group of employees that creates a risk to their health and safety.

The most common forms of bullying in Australian workplaces are bossing people around, intimidating, threatening or keeping them under pressure.

More workers are bullied by employers and managers than by fellow workers. Workers may also be harassed by clients, customers, contractors or others from outside the workplace, and bullying can happen between co-workers.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EMPLOYERS?

Under OHS laws, employers must:

- consult with employees and OHS representatives
- provide adequate and appropriate information, training, instruction and supervision
- identify, assess and control hazards, including systems of and behaviours that may lead to bullying
- provide a safe work environment
- provide healthy and safe workplaces and work systems, including a working environment where the risk of bullying is

eliminated or minimised

Some forms of bullying are outlawed by equal opportunity or anti-discrimination legislation.

ORGANISING TO PREVENT BULLYING

Workers can:

- meet to discuss causes, effects and possible solutions to bullying - see WorkSafe's Guidance Note on Workplace Bullying and Violence at: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au or ask your organiser for a copy
- collectively determine how to achieve a healthy and safe workplace.

Your health and safety representative and committee, or your union delegate, must be involved.

Health and safety representatives and union delegates can:

- ensure that all workers know that they have the right to refuse work likely to endanger them
- collect evidence of the problem - for example, talk to workers, do a survey, keep records of incidents
- meet with the employer
- seek control of hazards at the source
- develop a prevention policy in consultation with workers and management

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- include anti-bullying procedures in enterprise agreements
- contact the union or WorkSafe inspectors if necessary

Workers and their representatives must be consulted by employers on policies and procedures to prevent bullying that:

- acknowledge that bullying is a health and safety issue that can be prevented
- identify the factors that contribute to bullying at work
- outline simple, clear procedures that enable workers to raise concerns without fear of intimidation or discrimination
- include processes for ongoing review and evaluation

If an employer will not act on these issues, health and safety representatives can issue provisional improvement notices (PINs). These are official notices to an employer that a health and safety issue exists and needs to be fixed.

WorkSafe inspectors can direct employers to fix problems in the workplace and can issue prohibition or improvement notices.

Do people in your workplace experience:

- intimidation
- unreasonable demands or impossible targets
- restrictive and petty work rules
- compulsory overtime, unfair rostering or allocation of work
- constant, intrusive surveillance or monitoring
- no say in how their job is done
- interference with personal belongings or sabotage of work
- shouting
- abusive language
- open or implied threat of the sack or demotion?

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EFFECTS OF BULLYING?

Does bullying in your workplace result in:

- serious physical illness
- alcohol and drug use
- depression and suicidal thoughts

- headaches
- sleep difficulties
- high blood pressure
- digestive problems
- tearfulness
- anxiety
- nausea
- anger
- irritability
- loss of motivation, concentration, self-confidence and morale?

Bullying is bad for your health and also places pressure on family and friends.