

Workplace Bullying: Prevention & Response

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What is WorkSafe's Role in Workplace Bullying?



- In relation to bullying at work, WorkSafe's role is to ensure that **employers are meeting their obligation** to provide a **work environment that is safe and without risks to health** (including psychological health) by:
 - > preventing bullying, and
 - > dealing with bullying effectively when it occurs
- WorkSafe provides advice and guidance to employers and employees about how to meet their obligations, and how to access agencies that may assist with this process

What is Workplace Bullying?

*“Bullying is characterised by **persistent and repeated** negative behaviour directed toward an employee or group of employees that creates a risk to health and safety”*

Examples of Bullying Behaviour

Direct Behaviours

- Verbal abuse
 - Intimidation and threats
 - Putting someone down
- Spreading rumours about someone
- Interfering with someone's personal property or work equipment

Indirect Behaviours

- Unjustified criticism or complaints
- Deliberately excluding someone from work activities
- Withholding information that is vital for effective work performance
- Setting tasks unreasonably above or below a worker's ability

Examples of what is NOT Workplace Bullying



- An employer has a legitimate authority to direct and control the way work is done
- It is reasonable for employers to allocate work and for managers and supervisors to give fair and reasonable feedback on an employees performance
- Informing a worker about unreasonable behaviour in a fair and constructive way
- Transferring a worker to another area or role for operational reasons
- Setting realistic and achievable performance standards and deadlines

The Impacts of Workplace Bullying



Recent Prosecution



A Geelong builder was recently convicted and fined \$12,500 in the Geelong Magistrates Court

Victim exposed to:

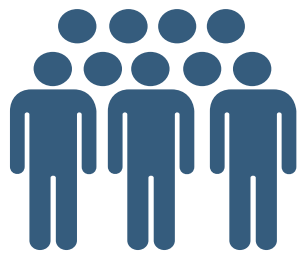
- Being spat at
- Having liquid nails squirted in his hair
- Having hot drill bits held against his skin
- Plaster smeared across his face & into his eye and ear
- Inappropriate questioning about his sex life
- Posting inappropriate sexual comments on a female friends Facebook page
- Continuous derogatory remarks & name calling



Role of Employer & Senior Managers



- ✓ Have policies and procedures addressing psychosocial hazards
- ✓ Set standards of behaviour
- ✓ Provide information, training and induction
- ✓ Consult with employees and HSR's
- ✓ Be aware of psychosocial risks and develop framework to address
- ✓ Monitor, evaluate and review workplace processes and risk assessments
- ✓ Drive a positive culture



Role of the Supervisor



- ✓ Know how to recognise bullying
- ✓ Monitor work environment
- ✓ Act on inappropriate behaviour
- ✓ Support employees to speak up
- ✓ Support workplace processes
- ✓ Take matters seriously
- ✓ Act impartially and confidentially
- ✓ Model positive behaviour and leadership styles





Role of Employees



- ✓ Comply with workplace policy
- ✓ Recognise when something may be inappropriate and alert supervisors
- ✓ Comply with prevention measures
- ✓ Participate in training
- ✓ Cooperate with investigations



Impact of Social Media

- Cyber bullying is as prevalent as other forms of workplace bullying
- It is important to develop and implement a social media policy to set the standard for employee behaviour.
- In the absence of a social media policy, it will be difficult to argue that you have taken all reasonable precautions to prevent the offending behaviour



What Inspectors from The Psychosocial Operations look for...



- Prompt & appropriate action to address inappropriate behaviour
- Impartial and thorough investigation with outcomes/feedback communicated to all relevant parties
- Policies and procedures addressing workplace behaviours including the prevention and management of workplace bullying
- Regular training provided to employees addressing workplace behaviours (records of attendance and topics covered should be maintained)
- Thorough induction provided to new employees
- Policies are easily accessible to all employees

Questions?



www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

WorkSafe Advisory Service: 1800 136 089





Thank you