



Australian Government

Comcare



# WORKPLACE BULLYING

## WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is repeated unreasonable behaviour that is humiliating, intimidating, threatening or demeaning to a person, or group of persons at the workplace, which creates a risk to health and safety. A bully could be anyone in the workplace including a manager, a supervisor or a co-worker. Bullying can affect anyone and may be a notifiable incident to Comcare.

Bullying behaviour may be subtle and not easy to observe for other people or it may be overt and noticeable to others. It may include verbal abuse, constant 'put-downs' and aggression. Persistent, unreasonable criticism of work performance or unreasonable work demands are also common bullying behaviours. Inappropriate comments about someone's appearance, personal preferences or choices, or work performance may also be bullying.

## WHAT IS NOT BULLYING?

It is important to understand the difference between exercising legitimate authority and practices, and abuse and bullying.

For example, persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) have a legal right to direct and control how work is done and managers have a responsibility to monitor workflow and give feedback on performance in a respectful and fair way. If a worker has obvious performance problems, these should be identified and dealt with in a constructive and supportive way that does not involve personal insults or derogatory remarks.

## EXAMPLES OF WORKPLACE BULLYING CAN INCLUDE:

- > constant fault-finding and criticism of a trivial nature—often the criticism is based on distortion, misrepresentation or fabrication
- > refusal to acknowledge contributions and achievements
- > ongoing attempts to undermine
- > being singled out and treated differently from colleagues
- > being isolated and separated from colleagues
- > being belittled, demeaned and patronised, especially in front of others
- > being humiliated, shouted at and threatened, often in front of others
- > being overloaded with work, or having all your work taken away and replaced with either simple menial tasks or with no work at all
- > finding that your work—and the credit for it—is stolen or plagiarised
- > having your responsibility increased but your authority taken away
- > having annual leave, sick leave, and especially compassionate leave refused without reasonable grounds
- > being denied training necessary for you to fulfill your duties
- > having unrealistic goals set, which change as you approach them
- > being subjected to inappropriate disciplinary procedures.



## **I THINK I AM BEING BULLIED, I SHOULD:**

- > record exactly what has happened
- > talk to someone you trust
- > read your organisations bullying policies and procedures
- > understand your options, including:
  - do nothing
  - confront your bully if you feel able to do so
  - report the incident
- > seek advice from:
  - your manager, human resources area, worker contact officer, health and safety representative, worker representative or employee assistance program
- > above all:
  - remain calm
  - keep an ongoing record of events
  - don't be a silent witness to workplace bullying—it is important.

Remember, you can discuss your concerns with your line manager, worker contact officer, employee assistance program provider or your health and safety representative.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

[comcare.gov.au/preventing/hazards/psychosocial\\_hazards/bullying\\_in\\_the\\_workplace](http://comcare.gov.au/preventing/hazards/psychosocial_hazards/bullying_in_the_workplace)

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