

***Preventing Bullying  
in your Workplace***

**KEY ISSUES**

- *Workplace Bullying is a major Health and Safety issue in our Sector*
- *Early intervention and adequate policies and procedures help minimise the occurrence and the impact of Workplace Bullying*

**ACTION**

- *Ask your employer for a copy of their policy and procedures for dealing with Workplace Bullying.*
- *Where none exist, take action to get effective policies and procedures developed.*
- *Display this fact sheet in your staffroom.*
- *Discuss it with colleagues.*
- *Make Workplace Bullying issues a regular item of discussion in your Chapter.*

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**What is Workplace Bullying?**

Workplace Bullying is a major Workplace Health and Safety issue in our Sectors across both Queensland and the Northern Territory. A national Guide known as the *Safe Work Australia Guide to Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying* was developed and implemented to assist in managing bullying complaints. Workplace Bullying is defined in the Guide as *repeated and unreasonable behaviour* directed towards a worker or a group of workers that *creates a risk to health and safety*. The Fair Work Commission now has powers to make orders in relation to bullying complaints, and the definition used in the *Fair Work Act 2009* is based on this definition:

A worker is bullied at work if an individual or group of individuals **repeatedly** behaves **unreasonably** towards the worker or a group of workers of which the worker is a member and that behaviour constitutes **a risk to health and safety**".

The Guide also states that *repeated behaviour refers to the persistent nature of the behaviour and can involve a range of behaviours over time.*

Further, this Guide advises that *unreasonable behaviour means behaviour that a reasonable person, having considered the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening*. Examples of behaviour are offered, whether intentional or unintentional, that may be considered to be workplace bullying if they are *repeated, unreasonable and create a risk to health and safety* include but are not limited to:

- abusive, insulting or offensive language or comments
- unjustified criticism or complaints
- deliberately excluding someone from workplace activities
- withholding information that is vital for effective work performance
- setting unreasonable timelines or constantly changing deadlines
- setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person's skill level
- denying access to information, supervision, consultation or resources to the detriment of the worker
- spreading misinformation or malicious rumours
- changing work arrangements such as rosters and leave to deliberately inconvenience a particular worker or workers.

A single incident of unreasonable behaviour is not considered to be workplace bullying, however it may have the potential to escalate and should not be ignored. The exception is Sexual Harassment which is dealt with under anti-discrimination legislation.

These types of behaviours make the workplace uncomfortable and unhealthy and need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. If allowed to continue, serious Workplace Health and Safety incidents will occur.

**How do you stop Workplace Bullying becoming an issue in your workplace?**

A whole of workplace approach is needed to address the behaviour by developing a Workplace Bullying Policy. The aim of the policy is to identify the behaviour early, stop it without reprisals and try to rectify any disadvantage that occurred.

Any workplace policy should follow these principles:

- The right of all individuals to be treated with respect
- The right of the accused to be informed of the allegations
- Observance of natural justice
- Acceptance of the legitimacy of the complainant's feelings
- Support and protection for all parties involved

Workplace Bullying should also be on the agenda at every Workplace Health and Safety Committee meeting. Health and Safety Representatives should be elected to ensure a stronger voice for staff on matters of safety in the workplace.

IEUA-QNT has developed a training course designed to help participants identify and address bullying by giving them the education to formulate a policy. Your union also has resources to assist members in dealing with bullying issues.

Contact your Union organiser or staff representative to speak about Workplace Bullying.

***IEUA-QNT Members – Acting Collectively to Improve Safety***