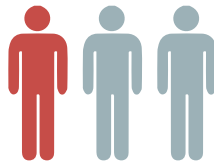# WHAT IS WORKPLACE BULLYING?

Workplace Bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker, or a group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety. Workplace bullying sits within Australian workplace health and safety law, requiring employers to take reasonably practicable steps to prevent psychological injuries and illness arising from exposure to workplace bullying hazards.
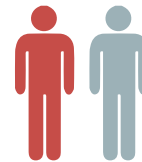
**6.8%** OF AUSTRALIAN WORKERS EXPERIENCED WORKPLACE BULLYING IN THE **PREVIOUS 6 MONTHS**

**3.5%** OF WORKERS WERE SUBJECTED TO WORKPLACE BULLYING FOR **MORE THAN 12 MONTHS**

**1 in 3 workers WILL DIRECTLY** experience workplace bullying at some point during their career

**1 in 2 workers WILL WITNESS** workplace bullying at some point during their career

## COMMON BULLYING BEHAVIOURS EXPERIENCED IN AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACES INCLUDE:

- VERBAL ABUSE
- EXCESSIVE CRITICISM
- BEING IGNORED OR ISOLATED
- BEING GIVEN AN UNMANAGEABLE WORKLOAD
- GOSSIP AND RUMOURS
- PUBLIC RIDICULE AND HUMILIATION
- EXCESSIVE PRESSURE AND UNREASONABLE DEADLINES

## IMPACTS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

### INDIVIDUAL

- Psychological distress
- Impaired cognitive ability
- Poor work performance
- Low self-esteem
- Physical illness

### ORGANISATIONAL

- Decreased productivity
- Turnover
- Decreased trust, loyalty and morale
- Illness and injury costs
- Poor public image

# CONSEQUENCES OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

**75%**

OF WORKERS EXPERIENCING WORKPLACE BULLYING **WILL TAKE TIME OFF WORK**

OF BULLIED WORKERS **EXPERIENCE THE SYMPTOMS OF GENERAL TRAUMA**

**65%**

OF WORKERS WILL CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE THE IMPACTS OF BULLYING **MORE THAN 5 YEARS LATER**

**50%**

OF WORKERS EXPERIENCING WORKPLACE BULLYING **WILL QUIT THEIR JOBS**

## TOP 5

### INDUSTRIES MAKING MENTAL STRESS CLAIMS IN AUSTRALIA

(percentage of total claims)

**EDUCATION**
16%

**GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENCE**
9.6%

**HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**
20.5%

**RETAIL TRADE**
7.2%

**PERSONAL AND OTHER SERVICES**
13.6%

# PREVENTING AND MANAGING WORKPLACE BULLYING

## AWARENESS AND EDUCATION FOR WORKERS

Training designed to increase employee awareness about what constitutes workplace bullying, its determinants, its impacts, and how to prevent and manage it, is a vital step in preventing bullying and should be available to the whole organisation.

## CREATING A CULTURE OF WELLBEING

To assist in preventing the occurrence of bullying behaviours, organisations should promote a culture that is focused upon maintaining work life balance, managing stress, developing resilience, and ensuring worker wellbeing is supported through experiences of change and work pressure.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leaders are central in preventing and managing workplace bullying. Leaders should receive developmental opportunities that allow them to understand effective leadership practices, influencing culture, setting expectations, identifying and managing risks, and managing conflict, amongst others.

**Sources:**

Dollard, M. (2012). The Australian workplace barometer: report in psychosocial safety climate and worker health in Australia. *Safe Work Australia*.

Einarsen, S. (1999). The nature and causes of bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20(1/2), p.16.

Faure-Brac, J. (2012). A slow poison. *About the House*, 46, pg.20.

Hanley, G. (2003). Don't do what I do – just bloody well do what I say! The workplace bullying experiences of Australian academics [working paper]. *Faculty of Business and Economics, Monash University*.

Safe Work Australia (2013). *The Incidence of Accepted Worker' Compensation Claims for Mental Stress in Australia.* http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/about/publications/pages/workers-compensation-claims-for-mental-stress-in-australia