

# BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

**WORKPLACE BULLYING is well recognised as a work health and safety matter that can occur in all types of workplaces. It can affect the emotional, mental and physical health of workers.**

## WHAT IS BULLYING?

Workplace bullying can be defined as repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker, or a group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety.

Bullying can be either direct or indirect.

### DIRECT BULLYING COULD INCLUDE:

- Verbal abuse
- Threatened or actual assault
- Interfering with someone's personal property or work equipment
- Humiliating someone especially in front of workers and clients
- Spreading unfounded or malicious rumours
- Initiation rituals

### INDIRECT BULLYING COULD INCLUDE:

- Unjustified criticism or complaints
- Deliberately excluding someone from workplace activities
- Withholding information that is vital for effective work performance

- Excessive unwarranted monitoring of a person's work
- Unreasonably removing areas of responsibility and imposing menial tasks

### BULLYING BEHAVIOUR MAY INVOLVE SUCH THINGS AS:

- aggressive or intimidating conduct
- belittling or humiliating comments
- spreading malicious rumours
- teasing, practical jokes or 'initiation ceremonies'
- exclusion from work-related events
- unreasonable work expectations, including too much or too little work, or work below or beyond a worker's skill level
- displaying offensive material
- pressure to behave in an inappropriate manner

### WHAT ISN'T BULLYING?

Reasonable management actions carried out in a fair way are not bullying. For example:

- Setting performance goals, standards and deadlines
- Rostering and allocating working hours
- Providing constructive feedback
- Performance management processes

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## **BULLYING IS ILLEGAL**

NAB has a policy that establishes appropriate workplace behaviours in relation to discrimination and harassment and sets out the process for making a complaint about bullying.

If the issue is not resolved internally there are a variety of ways to address the problem including using Work Health and Safety laws, anti-discrimination laws or the Fair Work Commission. The best approach will depend on your situation, and the FSU can provide you with advice and assistance.

At the FSU we believe a proactive approach to workplace issues, through early intervention usually gets the best result. As a member you should seek the advice and support of your union as early as possible before a small problem becomes a larger problem.

The key to developing positive relationships in the workplace is clear communication. In our experience, this can be difficult when you're feeling upset or emotional. That's why it's important to access impartial and independent advice and support.

## **WHAT IF I SEE BULLYING OCCURRING?**

*"The standard you walk past is the standard you accept."*

As union members, it is important we support each other. If you see someone being bullied at work - a good start is to talk to the person - "I saw what happened and that is not ok".

Don't be silent when you see bullying. Report it or become a witness. That's the best way to stamp out bullying in the workplace.

Other things you can do to help support a co-worker include:

- Write down what you saw and heard, (when, where, who said what)
- Offer to be a witness if they want to make a complaint
- Encourage them to get support from their FSU Rep or Organiser
- Make sure they have access to information about counselling services

## **IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED AT WORK LOOK AFTER YOURSELF!**

If you are affected by bullying in your workplace, you can seek help and assistance. Contact the Member Rights Centre on 1300 366 378.

NAB also provides free counselling services to employees through their Employee Assistance Program. They're available on 1300 360 364.

Lifeline phone counselling - call 13 11 14.

Beyond Blue call 1300 224 636 or by email : [infoline@beyondblue.org.au](mailto:infoline@beyondblue.org.au)

## **DEALING WITH WORKPLACE BULLYING**

Every situation is different. How you handle workplace conflict will depend on your work environment and the nature of the conflict.

### **1. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:**

Health and safety laws are in place to protect you. NAB has additional policies in place that specifically deal with workplace conflict, bullying and harassment - including processes for resolving conflict - so make sure you are familiar with them.

### **2. KEEP RECORDS:**

Resolving conflict often relies on your ability to demonstrate patterns of behaviour over time. Keeping notes on exactly what happened is very important. These should be written as close as possible to the time the event occurred, and should include when, where and what was said or done (as close to the exact words as possible). The FSU Member Rights Centre can provide members with a bullying diary to help with record keeping.

### **3. LOOK AFTER YOURSELF:**

We know that bullying can be tough to deal with from an individual perspective. It can help to express your thoughts and emotions to an independent person rather than keeping it all 'bottled up'. Get help from an appropriate professional.