



**WOMEN  
IN THE  
AWU**

# BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

## **NEVER ACCEPTABLE**

The Australian Workers' Union does not accept that bullying and harassment in the workplace is ever permissible, and employers have an obligation to create a safe environment.

Bullying and harassment are widely acknowledged as significant health risks. As a common cause of workplace stress, bullying and harassment can lead to adverse psychological and physical reactions such as:

- Depression and depressive episodes;
- Anxiety disorders;
- Increased heart rate;
- Mania;
- Headaches;
- Fatigue; and
- Lethargy.

These physical and psychological conditions can influence people's ability to perform their roles adequately and are known to contribute significantly to:

- Absenteeism;
- Loss of confidence;
- Loss of motivation; and
- Ability to fulfil responsibilities.

The AWU believes that no worker should ever feel intimidated and stressed at work as the result of inappropriate behaviour from colleagues, management or visitors to their workplace.

## **HOW TO RECOGNISE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT**

Bullying and harassment are broad terms for various behaviours that are intended to ridicule, humiliate, intimidate or degrade. These feelings can be subjective and incidences of workplace conflict are not necessarily workplace bullying or harassment. Some things in a workplace may seem unfair but are not considered bullying and harassment. Employers and managers are, if acting reasonably, within their rights to:

- Performance-manage;
- Discipline;
- Transfer;
- Demote;
- Terminate; and
- Make redundant.

However, repeated inappropriate behavior such as the examples below, can be bullying and harassment.

- Unfair behaviour where others are given preferential treatment;
- Unwelcome sexual advances, including lewd and suggestive comments and jokes;
- Rumours and verbal insults such as name calling;
- Making threats about job security without foundation;
- Overbearing supervision or misuse of power;
- Discrimination due to association with a union;
- Systematic targeting;
- Unreasonable workload and unattainable deadlines;
- Pushing and other forms of violence and inappropriate contact; and
- Discrediting professional ability.

Bullying and harassment can be communicated in many ways and can occur on the telephone, via email, via instant messaging services, through correspondence and in written notes.



**Need more information on this issue? Call the AWU free on 1300 885 653.**



**WOMEN  
IN THE  
AWU**

# BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

## COURSE OF ACTION

If a worker believes that they are being bullied or harassed the following steps are recommended:

- Keeping a diary and log of any instances of bullying whether verbal or written;
- Noting examples where others are treated in a more respectful and appropriate manner;
- Making note of any others who are being bullied or harassed;
- Contacting the union to speak with an organiser about the case;
- Addressing the matter with the aggressor and asking them to cease; or
- Addressing the matter with management or supervisors.

If a worker or group of workers would like to deal with parts of the process independently the AWU can help them protect their rights. It is always advisable to contact the union to notify them of the situation and complaint.

Workers have the right to a comfortable, safe and happy working experience and employers have a duty of care to ensure they do.

If an internal formal complaints procedure has been entered into the union can represent workers during the process by attending meetings, sending correspondence on their behalf and making sure that they are getting a fair go. If there continues to be unreasonable treatment, the union can support workers to take their complaint to the appropriate state and federal bodies.

If you feel that a colleague, group of colleagues, manager or employer are targeting you then there are rights and protections you are entitled to and the AWU can help you exercise them.

**Free Call the AWU on 1300 885 653**



**Need more information on this issue? Call the AWU free on 1300 885 653.**