

APPENDIX A - WORKPLACE BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Bullying in the workplace can be defined as 'repeated unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour directed towards an employee, or group of employees, that creates a risk to health and safety. Bullying is defined by the effect of the behaviour, even though there may not be a specific intent to bully (i.e. bullying is not always intentional or conscious). The repeated nature of the bullying behaviour is often a pattern of incidents that escalate over time and may impact an employee's wellbeing, productivity and performance.

Workplace bullying can occur: at any worksite or work-related activity (eg training courses, conferences, social functions); during and after work-hours; via phone, online and social media; and on equipment privately owned by the employee.

There are two main types of bullying behaviours, direct and indirect.

Direct bullying may include these behavioural examples:

- abusive, insulting or offensive language;
- behaviour or language that frightens, humiliates, belittles or degrades, including abuse, sarcasm or criticism;
- inappropriate comments about a person's appearance, lifestyle or their family;
- interfering with a person's personal effects or work equipment;
- harmful or offensive initiation practices; and
- physical assault or threats. Criminal offences should be reported to the police and principal or line manager.

Indirect bullying may include these behavioural examples:

- overloading a person with work or not providing enough work;
- unfair treatment in relation to accessing workplace entitlements such as leave or training;
- setting timelines that are difficult to achieve or constantly changing deadlines;
- repeatedly setting tasks that are below or beyond a person's skill level;
- ignoring or isolating a person;
- deliberately denying access to information, consultation or resources;
- spreading rumours or innuendo about someone; and
- unnecessarily changing work arrangements, such as rosters and leave, to the detriment of a worker or workers.

What is not bullying

Many things that happen at work are generally not considered to be bullying, although some experiences can be uncomfortable for those involved. Differences of opinion and disagreements are generally not workplace bullying.

It is important to differentiate between a person's legitimate authority at work and bullying. Employers 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.

Examples of behaviours that are not bullying include:

- carrying out legitimate or reasonable management decisions or actions;
- expressing differences of opinion;
- providing constructive and courteous feedback, counselling or advice about work-related behaviour; and
- making a complaint about a manager's or employee's conduct in a reasonable way.

While single incidents of inappropriate workplace behaviour are not bullying, they should be documented and may be raised with the person concerned, principal or line manager.

Source: Based on [Prevention of workplace bullying in the WA public sector – A guide for Agencies](#), Public Sector Commission.