

## Bullying

[What is bullying?](#)

[Bullying can take on many forms.](#)

[What are the types of bullying: discrimination, racial and religious vilification, harassment, and sexual harassment?](#)

[What can you do?](#)

[Are you an older person who is being bullied?](#)

[Helpful links](#)

## What is bullying?

Bullying is when people intentionally use words or actions against someone or a group of people to cause distress and risk to their physical or emotional wellbeing or their ability to function effectively at work or school. It is repeated and can be verbally or physically aggressive in nature. Usually those who are responsible for the bullying behaviour have some influence or power (perceived or actual) over the person or persons being bullied, causing those being bullied to feel powerless or frightened.

Bullying in the work place, school, online and the community can have devastating effects on the individual. Bullying can cause you to feel unsafe, hopeless, rejected, depressed, stressed, ashamed and even suicidal.

**If someone is bullying you and you feel unsafe, afraid or suicidal seek help immediately. Go to someone you trust; a parent, a friend, a counsellor, your boss, your human resources manager, or call emergency services on 000.**

Bullying is unacceptable. Dependent on the situation and the severity it is considered a crime and can be punishable by law.

## Bullying can take on many forms

- being dominated or taking power over you by someone or a group
- being harassed or abused physical or emotionally
- cyber-bullying: This can take on many forms, over various social sites
- having rumours, or lies spread about you
- people making you feel worthless or devalued
- intentionally being stalked

- being harassed due to your race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, or disability
- making fun of you, such as rude name calling, or negative teasing especially in front of others
- excluding you from workplace activities or withholding information especially if they are restricting you from doing your job effectively or seeking to improve your work status

If you're being bullied at work, there are steps you can take to stop it.

## What are the types of bullying: discrimination, racial and religious vilification, harassment, and sexual harassment?

### Workplace bullying

Work place bullying is characterised by persistent and repeated and negative behaviour directed at an individual that creates a risk to health and safety, threaten their ability to do a job or advance in the workplace according to ability and performance. Workplace bullying can be carried out verbally, physically or in writing, via email, on the internet or by mobile phone. Workplace bullying can be direct or indirect, some examples include:

#### Direct:

- verbal abuse
- putting someone down
- spreading rumour or innuendo about someone
- interfering with someone's personal property or work equipment

#### Indirect:

- unjustified criticism or complaints
- deliberately excluding someone from workplace activities
- deliberately denying access to information or other resources
- withholding information that is vital for effective work performance
- deliberately changing work arrangements, such as rosters and leave, to inconvenience a particular worker or workers

### What is not workplace bullying

Reasonable management actions carried out in a reasonable way is not bullying, for example:

- rostering and allocating hours
- deciding not to select an employee for promotion
- performance management / improvement
- constructive feedback

## Discrimination

Treating someone unfairly because of a personal characteristic and causing them to be disadvantaged as result. Discrimination is against the law when it occurs in an area of public life (including employment, education, accommodation and the provision of goods and services). It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of an actual or assumed personal attribute including: age, breastfeeding, carer status, disability or impairment, employment activity, gender identity, industrial activity, irrelevant criminal record, lawful sexual activity, marital status, parental status, physical features, political belief or activity, pregnancy, race, religious belief or activity, sex, sexual orientation and social origin (Equal Opportunity Act 2010 s. 6).

## Racial and religious vilification

Behaviours that incite or encourages hatred, serious contempt, revulsion or severe ridicule against another person or group of people, because of their race or religion.

## Harassment

Any form of behaviour that is not wanted, is not asked for and not returned and that is likely to create a hostile or uncomfortable workplace by humiliating, intimidating or offending another person because of an attribute protected by the law.

## Sexual harassment

Unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature. It involves behaviour that could reasonably be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. Sexual harassment is against the law and could be physical, verbal or written. Sexual harassment can involve: unwelcome sexual propositions or continued requests for dates, unwelcome comments about a person's sex life or physical appearance, sexually offensive comments, anecdotes or jokes, physical contact such as touching or fondling, displaying sexually offensive material (such as photos, posters, magazines or objects), sexually offensive material transmitted by fax, telephone, email office intranet, video conference or any other means of communication.

## What can you do?

- read your employer's policy on bullying, discrimination and harassment
- record what has happened to you in detail and try to include people who might have witnessed the bullying behaviour. Keep records of the bullying or sexual harassment you are experiencing. It may help if you choose to file a complaint
- talk to someone you trust –a friend, counsellor, or other support person
- tell a manager or supervisor (bullying in the workplace should not be tolerated and it is everyone's responsibility to report bullying and sexual harassment even if it is not happening you, but you witness it.)
- if you feel comfortable try talking to the person about how their behaviour makes you feel and request that they stop
- it is your right to file a formal complaint for bullying and sexual harassment. However, the person you are filing the complaint against has the right to tell their side of the story.
- in a formal complaint you are allowed to name people who you believed have witnessed the behaviour and you are allowed an advocate of your choice to support you through the process

- your employer is not allowed to fire or dismiss you for making a formal complaint
- bullying is not asking you to participate in performance reviews or meet targets
- if you feel that you are not getting the support you need at work you can talk to the Fair Work Ombudsman and get more info on their anti-bullying and anti-sexual harassment process, you can speak to a union rep, or if the bullying or sexual harassment is violent or threatening, go to the police

Advice for employees: Fair work Ombudsman 13 13 94 [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)

Advice for employers: Fair Work Australia 1300 824 132 [www.fairworkhelp.com.au/Australia](http://www.fairworkhelp.com.au/Australia)

## Are you an older person who is being bullied?

Bullying in older persons is not uncommon. Anyone can be a bully. Seniors can be bullied by other seniors living in retirement communities or homes. Older persons can also be bullied by care givers - paid or unpaid. Sometimes bullying happens within families.

\*If someone you know is bullied and cannot advocate for themselves, talk to them and see if they need you to seek help on their behalf.

## Helpful links

For regional services near you, please use the [Directory](#) or [Service Finder Navigational Tool](#) on this website.

The Australian Human Rights Commission 1300 656 419 [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

Bullying Zero Australia 1800 028 559 [www.bzaf.org.au](http://www.bzaf.org.au)

Bullying No Way [www.bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)

Reach out [www.au.reachout.com](http://www.au.reachout.com)

Lifeline 13 11 14

Kids helpline 1800 55 1800

Safe Work Australia <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/SWA/about/Publications/Documen...>

---

Source URL: <https://mentalhealthcompass.com.au/ssis/bullying>