



Workplace Relations Checklist

Managing workplace bullying

February 2017

Every organisation has a duty under workplace health and safety laws to identify and eliminate risks in the workplace. Workplace bullying is one of those risks, so each organisation needs to be satisfied that it is doing everything reasonably practicable to eliminate workplace bullying.

The first step is having a workplace bullying policy, and most organisations have one. But when was the last time you read your policy? Was it any good? Did you understand it? Does it need updating?

Our experience shows that merely having a policy is only a small part of the answer. Bullying complaints are more likely to get out of hand if the policy is unclear, or if it does not reflect the way bullying is managed in practice.

It is also essential that workplace bullying policies are not just prepared and then shoved in a drawer or framed on a wall. Policies should be living documents that can be clearly understood by:

- staff, who need to know that bullying is unacceptable, and how to make a complaint if they experience bullying; and
- managers, who need to know how to recognise and prevent workplace bullying, and what to do if they receive a complaint.

With that in mind, here are ten questions your key decision-makers should be able to immediately answer when it comes to workplace bullying:

Policies

- Do we have a bullying policy?
- Does it usefully define bullying and give relevant examples?
- Does it state that staff must not engage in bullying?
- Does it explain how staff can make a formal bullying complaint?
- Does it explain how management will respond to formal bullying complaints?

Training

- Do we train staff about how to informally manage their own concerns about bullying?
- Do we train our senior staff about how to recognise bullying and deal with informal complaints?
- Do we train our senior staff about how to manage formal bullying complaints?

Implementation

- Am I being informed of bullying complaints as and when they arise?
- Do we keep records of complaints received, how they are managed and any outcomes?

Well drafted policies and training will assist you to reduce your risk of an adverse outcome in a claim for workers' compensation or a Fair Work Commission bullying process. Please contact the **Russell Kennedy Workplace Relations, Employment and Safety team** if you would like to discuss how your organisation can improve its approach to stopping workplace bullying.