

### What is Bullying?

Bullying behaviour is repeated 'unreasonable and inappropriate behaviour' in the workplace or education environment which comprises behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades, insults or humiliates an employee or student. This can be physical or psychological behaviour.

### What is unreasonable and inappropriate behaviour?

This can mean behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances, would expect to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten another person. It may include behaviour such as:

- abusive, insulting or offensive language;
- excluding, isolating or marginalising others, deliberately or otherwise;
- behaving in a way that frightens or intimidates;
- humiliating others through sarcasm, belittling someone's opinions or unjustified criticism, including criticism delivered by yelling or screaming;
- teasing or making others the brunt of practical jokes;
- deliberately intruding on a person's space by pestering, spying or tampering with their work equipment or personal effects;
- spreading misinformation or malicious rumours;
- participating in 'collective bullying' or 'mobbing' which is characterised by passive aggressive group behaviour used as a deliberate strategy to drive an individual from the workplace or classroom;
- setting impossible assignments or deadlines;
- assigning meaningless tasks or unfairly assigning unpleasant tasks;
- treating someone unfairly in relation to work rosters or workplace entitlements such as leave or training;
- deliberately withholding information or resources necessary for effective work performance;
- carrying out initiation pranks; and
- displaying offensive material. (from Comcare [Bullying in the workplace](#))

### What isn't bullying?

Bullying in employment and education environments must not be confused with legitimate comment, criticism and advice, including relevant negative comment or feedback, from supervisors or academics on the work, study performance or behaviour of an individual or group. For example:

- Setting reasonable workplace goals and standards including work deadline – bearing in mind professional responsibilities to act in the best interests of clients, but to do so without jeopardising the health or safety of an employee or other work colleague.
- Reasonable supervisory practices.
- Reasonable work performance assessment, counselling and disciplinary practices.
- Fair and legitimate exhortation by management to encourage or urge staff members to give of their best.
- One-off incidents e.g. losing your temper, shouting or swearing.

(From Law Society of New South Wales 2004)

### Who is a bully?

Bullying can occur between peers (staff and students), from supervisor to staff, from staff groups to supervisor, from class room student group to academic, from academic to student, by men and women, at any age and by any cultural group.

Bullying behaviour is not always intentional and what offends one person may not always offend another person.

### What are employers' responsibilities?

Under Occupational Health and Safety legislation, employers have a duty to take all reasonably practicable steps to protect the health and safety at work of their employees. This duty requires employers to take proactive steps to identify those hazards with the potential to affect the health and safety of their employees and to implement measures to eliminate or control the risks arising from those hazards. This duty extends to psychosocial hazards in the workplace including bullying behaviours. (from Comcare [Bullying in the workplace](#))

## When is bullying considered to be discrimination?

Bullying behaviour whether a single or repeated incident/s may breach Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation, and will be considered within this legislative framework. The grounds for unlawful discrimination include race, colour, sex, sexual preference, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, status as a carer, age, disability, ethnic origin, nationality, breastfeeding requirements, or religious or political affiliation.

## What are the effects of bullying?

These can include:

- Lower productivity and poorer performance
- An inability to be creative and cope with change
- Accidents from stress and distraction
- Damage to emotional and physical health
- Far-reaching effects on confidence/ family life/ personal development

## What do we do at ANU against bullying?

The University is committed to ensuring that staff and students are treated with integrity and respect to maintain our reputation as Australia's leading university. ANU recognises that all members of ANU have the right to work and study in an environment free from discrimination, harassment and bullying. Harassment and bullying behaviours by staff or students are the antithesis of the University's values. Not only are these behaviours unlawful and will not be tolerated but they are also counterproductive to excellence in teaching and research.

The University takes reasonable steps to prevent bullying which include: -

- Communicating to staff and students the Policy on the 'Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying'
- Informing staff and students of their rights and responsibilities
- Informing all staff of the grievance resolution procedures and students of the complaints procedures
- Enabling opportunity for complaints/grievances to be conciliated
- Provide access to contact officers to discuss possible complaints of bullying
- Investigating for complaints of serious allegations, using procedural and substantive fairness
- Monitoring the employment and education culture

(From M. Burke, NSW ADB Employer Seminar Series 2004)

## Student Complaints policy and procedures

Complaints about bullying may be resolved through the University's Student Complaints procedures. In addition some types of bullying behaviour by students may lead to allegations being heard under the University's Discipline Rules, which, if proven, may result in exclusion.

## Staff grievance resolution policy and procedures

Complaints about bullying may be resolved through the University's Staff Grievance Resolution procedures. In addition some types of bullying behaviour by staff may lead to allegations being heard under the University's disciplinary procedures within the Enterprise Agreement, which, if proven, may result in dismissal.

## Where can I find out more information?

*At ANU*

[Prevention of discrimination, harassment and bullying Policy](#)

[Student Complaints procedures](#)

[Staff Concerns Regarding Employment Matters](#)

[Occupational Health and Safety Branch](#)

*External*

[Comcare](#)

[Bullying in the workplace](#) by Comcare

[Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission](#)