

## **Link 9 - Case Studies**

(Source – WorkSafe Publication 'Preventing and addressing bullying at work' – Edition 2 – February 2009)

### **Direct Bullying**

Repeated unreasonable behaviour

Brian, a project officer, was subjected to bullying by Mark (a co-worker with no supervisory role regarding Brian),

The behaviour Brian was subjected to included:

- Telling him his work was not up to scratch;
- Offensive verbal abuse;
- Threats to get him sacked;
- Telling him that he and his family would end up in the gutter;
- Making insulting comments about his relationship with his wife in front of others.

Risk to health and safety

The behaviour Brian was subjected to humiliated and intimidated him. He became severely stressed and anxious and was unable to continue working for the organisation due to the bullying.

### **Indirect Bullying**

Repeated unreasonable behaviour

Rae worked as a casual shop assistant in a supermarket with 30 employees for four years.

For the last 6 months, Sue has been her new shift supervisor. Sue changed the time of the staff meetings to 8:30am, which Rae couldn't attend because she had to drop her kids off at school. Sue told Rae she didn't have time to update her on what happened at team meetings, so Rae would only find out about the introduction of new products or changes to work procedures by trial and error. Rae used to mentor and train new employees on the job, but she found other employees were given that role. Newer casual employees were given set shifts while Rae had to ring Sue every week to find out if and when she would be working

Risk to health and safety

Rae felt humiliated and distressed by the treatment she received and ended up leaving the company once she found another job.

## **Bullying by more than one person**

Repeated unreasonable behaviour

Julia was a team leader working at a company undergoing restructuring. The change process had taken over eight months to complete. During this time, Julia felt she was put under unreasonable pressure by a number of staff who were more senior than her.

The behaviour she was subjected to included:

- Having her and her team's performance requirements repeatedly changed by different managers at very short notice;
- Being told that reports she had submitted were not up to scratch. When Julia asked how she could improve them her direct manager rolled his eyes and said 'don't bother, I'll fix it.';
- Being belittled by a colleague who said in front of a number of senior managers 'do you know how to do your job?';
- Being told by someone else at meetings to 'stop asking questions – just get on with it'.
- Not being included in regular meetings that she had previously been involved in;
- Having the CEO turn and look out the window and ignore her when she tried to speak in meetings with him;
- Finding out she was no longer being invited to work social functions.

Risk to health and safety

Julia felt distressed, had trouble sleeping and felt nauseous before she started work. She left the company once she found a suitable job.

## **Reasonable Management Action (not bullying)**

Mira works in the purchasing department of a large organisation. She has been there for six months and work with six other staff. The department is busy and the work required of the department is routine and shared evenly among the seven employees.

On a regular basis, Mira falls behind schedule with her tasks. To help develop her admin skills and improve her work performance, the purchasing manager asked Mira to attend a two day training course. Mira feels humiliated and singled out even though her manager assures her that her job is not under threat.