

Shove it! How to manage (and not manage) workplace bullying

It's that time of year again, a time for making (and maybe breaking) those well-intended New Year's resolutions. But, if there's one you should be sure to keep, it's a commitment to being bolder in tackling any workplace problems you might be having head-on.

As a spokesperson for [Work Safe Australia](#) explains, "Workplace bullying presents a real risk to health and safety. It is important to guard against bullying as it can affect the mental and physical health of workers. A healthy and safe workplace not only benefits the worker, their families and the community, but can also lead to more productive and sustainable businesses."

But workplace bullying can take many forms, so it's important to know exactly what constitutes it, so you can better guard yourself against it, and work toward a solution should you be enduring it. [Safe Work Australia](#) defines workplace bullying as "repeated and unreasonable behaviour," directed towards a worker or a group of workers that creates a "risk to health and safety."

While a single incident doesn't always constitute workplace bullying, it's important to be mindful that it could escalate to something more serious.

It can often be difficult to be objective, particularly if you find yourself stressed about the treatment you've been receiving. It's therefore a good idea to get the perspective of someone else who's not directly involved, to better assess whether it meets the workplace bullying definition. It's also something that can be raised with a human resources (HR) officer or a [health and safety representative](#) (HSR).

There's some important questions you should think about, which might better help you

determine whether you're being bullied or not:

- Is the behaviour being repeated?
- Is the behaviour unreasonable?
- Is the behaviour endangering your health and safety? This means your emotional, mental or physical welfare.

If you think you're being bullied, the first thing you should do is find out if your workplace has policy and procedures to help employees deal with these situations.

“Workplace bullying is best dealt with through prevention and responding early when it does occur,” says a spokesperson for Work Safe Australia. “The longer bullying behaviour continues, the more difficult it is to address and the harder it becomes to repair working relationships.”

With this in mind, if you feel comfortable, you can then approach the person involved, explain how you feel and, perhaps suggest alternative ways of behaving that don't leave you feeling victimised.

You may also want to think about reporting the bullying. There are a number of ways to go about this - inform your manager, contact your HR department, or utilise established reporting procedures if they're in place.

Legally, workplaces have the primary duty of care under the [Work Health and Safety Act](#) to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, that the health and safety of employees isn't jeopardised. This includes having systems in place that guard against workplace bullying.

If you can't resolve your issue at work, you can apply to the [Fair Work Commission](#) for an order to stop the workplace bullying. The focus of the Fair Work Commission is on resolving the matter and enabling normal working relationships to resume. However you choose to address the matter, be sure you don't stay silent.

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