

## Thought Leadership In HR

# Workplace bullying still rife in Australian companies

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Bullying is still rife in Australian workplaces a recent Drake International survey of over 800 Australia-wide employees has revealed. More than 50% of survey respondents had witnessed bullying behaviour and over 25% had been a target of bullying themselves. Poor management of the issue by Organisations was also revealed as only 30% of bullying targets and less than 50% of witnesses were satisfied with their organisations handling of the situation. More than 50% also noted the bullying behaviour had been going on for over 6 months.

“The results were disappointing and worrying from an organisational perspective” commented Judy Harper, Drake WorkWise National Client Services Manager, “Bullying is an identifiable psychological hazard in the workplace and therefore this is not just a conduct issue. Organisations need to do more -as a minimum they have a statutory duty of care to manage and control this inappropriate and damaging behaviour”.

Even though most of the sample were themselves in a supervisory role, ‘downwards’ bullying from managers or supervisors was reported in around 50% of the cases, with a further 25% experiencing ‘sideways’ bullying from workmates and colleagues. “Even though legitimate management and supervision of workplaces is not bullying, employees in those roles need to ‘walk the talk’ and model the necessary standard of behaviour” Judy Harper reported.

The survey revealed more subtle forms of bullying behaviour like silence and isolation or verbal insults, and sarcasm, are the most common representing 36% of instances. Public humiliation and criticism was the second most common behaviour representing 26% of instances. Gender was also revealed as no barrier, male and females were almost equally at fault as the bully or as the target of the behaviour. Bullying was also more widespread that just a single target and bully with 75% of the cases witnessed, being more than one target or multiple bullies and targets.

“Bullying behaviour can be tricky to address from an organisational standpoint particularly as only 50% of the survey respondents sought assistance for the situation” Judy Harper revealed. “Like other difficult issues, Organisations need to be pro-active and address inappropriate behaviour like bullying in a systematic manner if they want enduring behaviour change and improvement in the workplace.”