

**INQUIRY INTO ALLEGATIONS OF BULLYING IN  
WorkCover NSW**

**Name:** Mr Garry Fuchs

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Dear Sir

Thank you for the opportunity to place a submission on the allegations of bullying at Workcover.

I am currently employed as a Senior Manager in Information Services within the Finance and Services Division of WorkCover at Gosford.

I will preface my comments by admitting I am 57 years old and have a different view of bullying and what constitutes bullying but I am sure my views are the same of those of the same generation. I began in the NSW Public Service in 1975 and have seen many changes in culture, operation, priorities, leadership and management.

When I began work in the Public Service there was a strict protocol in communication, behaviour and decision making. While this may seem archaic in this day and age it did garner respect for managers. Maybe not personally in all cases but it did garner respect professionally. Generally up until approximately eighteen months ago this did not exist in WorkCover. There was a lack of respect for managers and the positions they hold. There was a sense of entitlement, by a lot of staff, no matter their rank or position which translated into them wanting to debate decisions made that had no impact on them personally or professionally. There was no consequence for comments made or communications sent. There was a sense that consultation equated to agreement and if staff did not agree and were made to follow through on the decision then it was seen as bullying. This is beginning to change but there is still some resistance.

Currently WorkCover is trying to address this and I am sure staff feel they are mistreated or in today's language "bullied". It was amazing the kaffuffle a simple statement like "No we won't be doing that" would take on. I think bullying is a term that is bandied quite freely in the workplace to discredit or delay decisions to achieve legitimate outcomes.

I myself have had instances with staff where, let's just say the conversation was robust. Afterwards I had staff tell me the staff member was inappropriate and a bully. To be honest the thought of bullying never entered my mind. I think this a generation thing which us 'baby boomers' with 'thick skins' have to come to terms with. WorkCover has done a lot of work on "building resilience" which I do not think has had the desired results.

I have no doubt there has been instances of bullying within WorkCover and have personally counselled staff on the issue both to issue a disapproval as well as support of staff thought they had been bullied. While suggesting I would support those staff they themselves for personal reasons decided not to take the matter further. Over the last eighteen months or so I have seen a significant decrease in these instances and I believe the actual culture within WorkCover as a whole is changing.

Sure, staff are disgruntled by changes in direction, structure and in some cases redundancies. While it is not pleasant I think the changes have been managed in the most respectful manner to both the staff and the organisation. I have heard that this is considered bullying it is not. In my opinion, it a business decision to change the direction to reflect government policy.

I believe there are some old fundamental values that were missing within WorkCover such as respect, work ethic and decency but they are beginning to re-emerge, which has become quite obvious in the realignment and restructure activities.

I often wonder if bullying is a 'problem of society' and not just isolated to WorkCover. I have witnessed over the years a diminishing lack of respect for positions in society. Agreed, I am no social commentator or psychologist this is just my view. I am sure there are a myriad of studies etc. to refute my opinion but I cannot deny what I have seen or witnessed over the last 35 years in society. Again look at drugs in sport, if society did not have a recreational (and I use that term lightly) drug use would sport have a recreational drug issue? I doubt it.

In short there may have been an issue with bullying within WorkCover and the instances that I consider bullying are few and far between.

I respectfully put forward some points for consideration

1. Bullying means different things to different generations and the term bullying is used inappropriately at times to meet the agenda of individuals.
2. If bullying is so rife why is there such a low turnover of staff within WorkCover?
3. A low staff turnover rate will send an organisation 'stale' and will cause instability and resistance to change
4. If staff are only working at WorkCover because they wish to work in Gosford I am not sure this is conducive to a harmonious environment.
5. Consultation does not mean agreement.
6. Reinstating the respect for positions or decisions made. Public Servants are responsible for supporting the government of the day whether we agree with them or not.

Yours respectfully

Garry Fuchs

Snr Manager, Strategy and Governance Information Services