

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

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## DEPOSITION TO WORKCOVER BULLYING INQUIRY

1. I was employed as a Specialist Occupational Physician at WorkCover NSW and its predecessor over the period 1988 to November 2005 at which time I accepted a redundancy.
2. From about 1998 the structure and the culture of WorkCover changed drastically. Before about 1998 the scientific divisions were largely involved in supporting NSW employers to develop safer and healthier workplaces and in monitoring and regulating workplaces. Managers of various sections were appropriately qualified professionals generally with high academic qualifications. After about 1998 the scientifically orientated units were progressively dissipated and the organization became more management orientated with very few well qualified scientific employees. Scientific staff such as doctors, occupational health nurses, hygienists, engineers and other specialists were re-roled and progressively excluded from appropriate work.
3. I *fully accept* that organizations usually evolve over time and develop different business plans and structures to meet new demands. In the case of WorkCover the transition that occurred resulted in an antagonistic environment particularly involving the scientific staff and 'managers' who, in many cases, appeared poorly qualified for their positions. Some managers appeared to go out of their way to 'put down' the professional groups and I found this very difficult to accept. It was clear that some employees who expressed contrary arguments to management views were disadvantaged in some ways.
4. In my opinion management frequently used bullying tactics to manipulate or obstruct employees. The attitude that prevailed, and was stated, was "I want my experts on tap, not on top". Professional advice was welcome only when it was requested, not when it was indicated by circumstances. Managers appeared to resent the award entitlements of professional staff such as study/conference leave and often obstructed the exercise of those entitlements. As an example, the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation (ASMOF) needed to apply to the court on at least four occasions on my behalf to get overseas conference leave approved. On another occasion management refused to pass on an application for study leave to the WorkCover Minister until ASMOF intervened.
5. On some occasions the exercise of power seemed illogical and even trivial. For example, it was announced that professionally qualified staff could not list their academic qualifications on their business cards. For occupational physicians who needed to perform medical examinations this was a very difficult situation indeed. This directive was subsequently withdrawn but it does illustrate the antagonism and resentment that existed within the department.

6. On another occasion an industrial dispute concerning professional accommodation for physicians was before the court. The sitting magistrate, after making his view very clear held the matter over for discussion between the parties. WorkCover then notified ASMOF that they would withdraw the offer of redundancies to the physicians, a completely separate issue, if the court action was continued. I would consider this a case of extreme bullying and very close to blackmail.
7. It appeared that some professional staff were discriminated against in that they were not assigned to, or were removed from, positions they were the best qualified for. One employee, when urged to complain about the situation said that he could not complain because he had a mortgage and children to educate. He said that “while they can’t do anything to me, they won’t do anything for me”.
8. Some lower level managers appeared to be embarrassed about carrying out some of their orders. One said to me, apologetically, “I have to do what my manager tells me to”.
9. I would be willing to provide verbal testimony to the inquiry if it would assist the inquiry.

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