

# Sticks and stones may break your bones but mean words... are a risk to health and safety!

MARQUE

**Stop and take a moment to look around your office, workplace, or wherever you may be sitting. Spot at least five of your colleagues? Odds are one of them has experienced mental ill-health in the last month. Or maybe you did.**

Australia has a mental health issue to tackle. Coupled with a workplace bullying epidemic (half of all Australian workers report that they've experienced workplace bullying), we've got a big problem on our hands.

Bullying is well recognised as a risk to health and safety and, as recently learned by a not-so-friendly carpenter, the law takes it seriously.

As with any risk to work health and safety, an employer must take all reasonable steps to eliminate or minimise workplace bullying. Therefore, it wasn't difficult for a Court to dish out a \$6,000 fine against the carpenter who was in the habit of verbally abusing, name calling, and swearing at his apprentices.

The carpenter was also ordered to undertake anger management, bullying and emotional intelligence training. Yes, the Court has the power to do this and many other things in an attempt to stamp out bullying.

Yet, despite its efforts, the law is ill-equipped to deal with workplace bullying and its impact on health. This is a job for employers. With a recent report finding that less than 10% of employers had an integrated and proactive approach to mental health, we have a long way go.

While conversations around mental health and workplace bullying are difficult, they must not be avoided. It's the first step towards tackling this problem.

Questions? Give us a call.



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