



At a glance

Expected vs unreasonable behaviour

**Respect.
Reflect.
Reset.**

RESPECT

Examples of expected behaviour:

- Treating all colleagues with equal respect, regardless of who they are and their job.
Use language that includes everyone.
- Building relationships based on mutual respect.
Find out about people's backgrounds, skills and interests.
- Communicating intentions clearly, inviting teamwork and collaboration.
Ask for feedback, share information and be transparent.
- Respecting differences between people.
Encourage and recognise others.
- Being respectful even if we hold different opinions or feel under pressure.
*Listen.
Speak calmly and politely.*
- Welcoming learning from others.
Be open and receptive to ideas from all people.

REFLECT

Employees at all levels, including leaders and managers, need to know behaviours such as these are not accepted:

- shouting, swearing, intimidating, threatening and throwing things.
- deliberately not sharing information that is necessary or would significantly assist someone in the performance of their job.
- intentionally excluding people from informal discussions or workplace social activities.
- ignoring and isolating people.
- not letting someone express their opinion.
- criticising or ridiculing someone's work or opinion in front of others.
- setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person's skill level.
- excessive monitoring and checking.
- unreasonably withholding or delaying approval of leave.
- spreading rumours.
- criticising or ridiculing someone's work or behaviour without giving them an opportunity to provide information or their own view.
- patronising behaviours based on assumptions about someone's culture or capability.
- colluding with others in denigrating someone or a group of people.

Management and employment functions are not bullying if carried out lawfully and reasonably. Examples include:

- leading, directing and controlling how work is done.
- monitoring work flow and work quality.
- giving feedback and managing performance.
- recruitment, assignment, transfer and termination of employment.
- differences of opinion and disagreements.

RESET

It is useful to be able to distinguish unreasonable behaviour or bullying from the normal action taken in the course of managing an organisation and employing people. When we reflect on our actions and the actions of others, we clarify our expectations and reset the standards of behaviour that we accept.



At a glance

Why prevent bullying in your organisation

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Bullying behaviour does not generally occur in isolation – it is part of a culture that, at a minimum, tolerates its existence. Bullying is a manifestation of poor workforce management practices.

We can prevent bullying by building and maintaining positive and respectful workplaces supported by workforce management systems.

REFLECT

Serious organisational risks can arise from failure to deal with unreasonable behaviour:

- **Personal cost to the employee**
The effect on an individual's well-being and that of their family can be profound, both psychologically and professionally. A poor culture can also damage the reputation of the organisation as an employer of choice.
- **Reduced quality of service to clients**
Disaffected employees who do not feel proud of their organisation are less likely to provide confident and positive client service.
- **Less innovation**
Workplaces that tolerate unreasonable behaviour tend to be less inclusive or open to alternative ideas and innovation as employees fear speaking up or disagreeing, leading to 'group think'.
- **Loss of productivity**
Bullying reduces workplace morale and employee engagement, which lowers productivity. It can also increase time off work with sick leave, workers' compensation, and cause higher staff turnover.
- **Financial cost to the organisation**
Direct workers compensation costs, costs of managing the conflict, the claim, any return to work processes and inevitable impacts on other team members.

RESET

Preventing bullying is good for your organisation. It is also worth knowing that:

- All government sector employees have responsibilities to demonstrate high levels of personal conduct consistent with the government sector core values in the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*.
- Managers and executives have responsibilities to lead and promote the government sector core values.
- Preventing bullying is a legislative duty under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.



At a glance

Preventing bullying

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Four characteristics of positive, inclusive and constructive workplaces:

1. Establish organisational values and a code of conduct (see [Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW government sector employees](#))
2. Be clear about expected behaviours
3. Respond promptly to one off incidents of poor behaviour
4. Use data to understand correlations with sound workforce management systems

REFLECT

Bullying can be prevented by taking a proactive, systemic approach to a range of workforce management and workplace culture factors. This will be more effective than reacting to individual incidents.

RESET

Implement

- Incorporate organisational values into recruitment, induction, team meetings, training and workforce management processes.

Manage

- Provide safe avenues for employees to raise issues with experiencing or witnessing unreasonable behaviour, either directly or via an intermediary.
- Assess adherence to, and understanding of, organisational values as part of workforce management processes.
- Incorporate 360-degree feedback in performance management for all managers.

Assess

- Use data to understand the correlation between poor workforce management practices and bullying. e.g. People Matter Employee Survey results, the PSC Workforce Dashboard, pulse surveys, workers' compensation claims, and unscheduled absences.
- Measure the effectiveness of workforce management strategies aimed at improving negative trends.
- Regularly monitor and act on workforce practice indicators, including

performance reviews, turnover, absenteeism and exit surveys.

- Report back to the whole organisation on results and encourage employees to discuss the results and help develop strategies for improving in areas of weakness.

Educate

- Personal responsibility for expected versus unreasonable behaviours.
- Address any unreasonable behaviour employees observe in others, including not excusing or minimising it when it occurs.
- Hold respectful conversations, including raising concerns about unreasonable behaviour.
- Resolve workplace conflict.
- Give and receive constructive positive and negative feedback on work performance.
- Recognise unconscious bias and be aware of issues around disability and cultural difference.
- Employee information and training should include explicit descriptions, and discussion, of actual behaviours that are not acceptable.
- Model high standards of behaviour.



At a glance for managers

Responding to unreasonable behaviour or bullying

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RESPECT

- Managers have a key role in supporting and empowering employees to resolve issues between themselves and prevent unnecessary escalation of matters.
- Managers guide the parties, remain objective and fair to all, provide support and focus on resolution of the issue, rather than assigning blame.
- Your HR or People and Culture area can be a valuable resource.

REFLECT

Assess situation:

- Assess the situation and any risks to employees involved and witnessing the behaviour. Seek to understand possible causes of the behaviour.
- Identify if there is a need for interim measures, e.g. temporarily reassigning tasks, separating parties, changing reporting.

RESET

Review systemic issues:

- Use available information on workforce management practice.
- Resolve by providing adequate information and training, and/or adjusting workplace management systems, such as clarifying roles or modifying workloads.

Is the behaviour serious, involving breaches of criminal or other legislation, or very serious misconduct?

- Yes:**
- Always investigate immediately, and resolve in a timely, fair, objective, transparent and confidential manner.
 - Refer potentially criminal behaviour to police, and complaints such as fraud or corruption to the appropriate authority. This does not mean stopping your own investigation.
- No:**
- **Ask and listen:** Ask questions and listen to employee concerns and what they want done. Offer support. Discuss the context and factors that may have contributed to the behaviour.
 - **Discuss options:** Discuss options for resolving quickly, effectively and informally. Where safe to do so, encourage the employee to resolve the matter directly with the other party.
 - **Respectful conversation:** Where direct discussion between the parties is not likely to succeed, you may facilitate the discussion. Listen to the person alleged to have behaved unreasonably, clarifying policies and procedures. Discuss options to resolve the matter and counsel taking an open approach.
 - **Resolve:** Ideal outcome is that both parties agree to work together to resolve the issue, calling on assistance if needed. Agreed outcomes might involve accepting behaviour was unreasonable, apologising, improving work practices, mentoring, training or accepting personal differences.