



# Position Against Discrimination, Bullying and Sexual Harassment

## Purpose

To outline Public Pathology Australia's position in order to assist its members in ensuring the workplace is free from discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.

## Background

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) commissioned research which found that:

- 49% of Fellows, trainees and international medical graduates report being subjected to discrimination, bullying or sexual harassment;
- 54% of trainees and 45% of Fellows less than 10 years post-fellowship report being subjected to bullying;
- 71% of hospitals reported discrimination, bullying or sexual harassment in their hospital in the last five years, with bullying the most frequently reported issue;
- 39% of Fellows, trainees and international medical graduates report bullying, 18% report discrimination, 19% report workplace harassment and 7% sexual harassment;
- the problems exist across all surgical specialties; and
- senior surgeons and surgical consultants are reported as the primary source of these problems.

The RACS commissioned a [report](#) into hospital approaches to preventing and addressing discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment. In September 2015, the RACS accepted a [final report](#) into discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the practice of surgery and subsequently issued an [apology](#) and an [action plan](#).

The Victorian Auditor-General conducted an audit on bullying and harassment in the health sector and released its [report](#) in March 2016. The audit found that there was inadequate leadership and the issue was given insufficient priority, there was a failure to identify and understand the hazard, there was poor accountability for inappropriate behaviour and under reporting of inappropriate behaviour. Key controls that would effectively reduce this risk to employee health and safety were either inadequately implemented, missing or poorly coordinated. It was found that health services were attempting to change their workplace culture, to adopt one that does not accept bullying and harassment.

Public Pathology Australia has not received complaints from individuals about instances of discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the public pathology workforce.

The widespread nature of discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in healthcare acknowledged by the RACS and the Victorian Government, warrants specific consideration of the issue in the public pathology workplace by Public Pathology Australia members.

Every person has a right to a safe workplace and patients have a right to expect that their healthcare is not compromised by discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.

**Discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment is not accepted**

In the workplace, it is the employer who can undertake disciplinary action against the employee, not Public Pathology Australia.

### **Position Statement**

Every employee working in publicly funded pathology services has a right to a workplace free of discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment and every student/trainee has a right to an education free of discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.

Discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment is not acceptable under any circumstances and is clearly regarded as actionable behaviour.

All public sector employers have:

- Policies, procedures and clear pathways for all employees and trainees to ensure that discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment is confronted and prevented.
- Leaders who are accessible and have an absolute willingness to act in accordance with designated pathways to confront and prevent discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment. There will be consequences for perpetrators and support for those affected.
- A transparent complaints management process. This process must capture observations and reports about behaviours. It may include open feedback from employees and organisational reviews.
- Education and training about appropriate workplace behaviours, countering discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.
- Resources to help those affected, such as employee assistance programs or designated support people within organisations.
- Procedures which recognise the importance of privacy and natural justice.
- Workplaces which foster and encourage a culture that embraces diversity and gender equity therefore providing an environment that is free of discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.

Public pathology services must proactively continue to build a culture of respect and professionalism.

Public pathology services must foster accessibility to existing organisational processes and recommend or instigate improvements to those processes where required. Examples include:

- Establishing networks where complainants can seek information and support on how and where they can make a complaint, including providing information on Public Interest Disclosure, Right to Information etc.
- Monthly/quarterly reporting to CEO's on number of complaints received etc.
- Every Role Description and Performance and Development Plan referencing support for an environment free of discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- Orientation programs to include awareness sessions on what constitutes discrimination, bullying and harassment (and what doesn't), zero tolerance policies and clear consequences.
- Ensuring that complainants are supported and protected from adverse consequences once a complaint is made.
- Mandatory feedback to the complainant about the outcome of a complaint within a specified timeframe.

## Resources

- [RACS Dealing with Discrimination, Bullying and Sexual Harassment \(Policy\)](#)
- [RCPA Anti-Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy](#)
- [Victorian Auditor General's Report on Bullying & Harassment in the Health Sector](#)

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Public Pathology Australia  
Council  
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