



Is your boss a workplace bully?

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Do you ever feel like your boss is targeting you? Do you feel like you're being treated unreasonably or unfairly? It is important to know the difference between what is appropriate management action and what is workplace bullying.

The Sydney Morning Herald has [published the results of a recent survey](#) conducted by Ray Morgan which showed that:

- one in four people said their boss had made them cry;
- one in five said they felt uncomfortable after receiving inappropriate remarks; and
- one in three said they had felt bullied.

This appears to be an increasing trend in workplaces, albeit not a new one.

Employees can often feel intimidated and even afraid of their bosses because of the way they exercise their authority over them, the way they communicate with them and even the way they act around them. But do any of these things actually mean you are being bullied in the workplace?

What is bullying?

You could be experiencing workplace bullying if an individual (including your boss), or a group of people, repeatedly acts unreasonably towards you and their behaviour creates a risk to your health and safety.

“Unreasonable behaviour” is defined as any behaviour that a reasonable person might see as unreasonable in the circumstances. This includes, aggressive, humiliating, intimidating or threatening conduct.

What is reasonable management action?

Reasonable management action is action taken by a boss or manager in relation to the way in which you conduct your work. In other words, a boss can take steps to monitor or direct and control your performance if they consider that you're not performing to an appropriate standard. It also allows managers to impose disciplinary action against you.

The thing you have to ask yourself is, "are the actions being taken for a legitimate purpose and in a reasonable way?" If not, then their actions may be considered bullying.

What do you do when you find yourself in this tricky situation?

Most workplaces will have a policy on bullying and harassment. Make sure you read it and understand your rights under the policy and any steps you are required to take to make a complaint.

Where possible it is preferable that you speak with your supervisor or manager about your concerns. It is important that you identify any instances that have occurred and explain why they didn't warrant their reactions or actions.

It is likely that you will have to continue working closely with your manager and it is important that you can communicate effectively with them to be able to work harmoniously.

If you don't feel safe or comfortable speaking with your manager or you feel intimidated by them, raising concerns with them may not be an option for you. If this is the case you should speak with HR about the issues you are having.

Depending on the severity of your complaint, HR may suggest mediation with an independent mediator to try and address both of your concerns and assist you to work together harmoniously in the future. Alternatively, they may suggest that you make a formal complaint.

What options do I have if the internal complaints process fails?

If the bullying conduct continues and/or the internal process in your workplace leaves you dissatisfied, then it is important that you seek advice from your union or legal representative. You may have some recourse to apply to the Fair Work Commission to obtain a "*stop the bullying order*".

No employee should be made to cry at work or feel intimidated, humiliated or threatened. It is important that every worker feels safe to show up to work without fear or trepidation.

Get help from an employment lawyer

If you're experiencing workplace bullying and you've either exhausted your options with the internal process or you're not comfortable raising your concerns with your employer, feel free to [get in touch](#) with one of our [Employment Law](#) team members to investigate your options. Today's blog writer is [Syvannah Harper](#).

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