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BULLYING AND SEXUAL HARRASSMENT INCIDENTS GO UNREPORTED

Two thirds claim reporting the incident may hinder prospective career opportunities

Australians being bullied and sexually harassed in the workplace are not reporting the incidents because they fear ruining their career, the latest CareerOne.com.au survey has revealed.

Of the 788 respondents surveyed, 62 per cent had been bullied and 29 per cent had been sexually harassed. Most of the respondents who had been bullied (59 per cent) or sexually harassed (74 per cent) didn't report the incident.

Kate Southam, editor of CareerOne.com.au said workers could find themselves more vulnerable in this cost cutting climate.

"In the current climate where thousands of jobs are being slashed, employers have more power and workers suffering poor conditions such as bullying fear losing their job if they complain.

"Redundancies also create greater workloads for those left behind adding to the stress already caused by the challenging economic conditions. Poorly trained managers who can't cope can resort to bullying."

Conducted by CareerOne.com.au in partnership with CoreData, the survey also found:

- 37 per cent of those who had been sexually harassed at work were women compared to the 19 per cent who were men.
- Most (77 per cent) of those who had been sexually harassed at work were sexually harassed by someone at a more senior level
- Of the respondents who had reported being bullied, 64 per cent were female and 60 per cent were male
- Most (74 per cent) respondents were bullied by a person who held a more senior position

"Employers that turn a blind eye to bad behaviour at work are failing to realise how much bullying and sexual harassment is costing them in lost productivity and staff loyalty.

"Not only is the target of the bullying and/or harassment focused on what is going on instead of on their work, so is the perpetrator and their respective support groups. Bullying also silences people so employers are only hearing one set of ideas – and they may not be the best ones.

"Such employers also risk litigation and damaging their reputation with potential future employees and clients. Tolerating bullying and harassment is just bad business practice."

According to Beyond Bullying, workplace bullying is defined as repeated unreasonable behaviour, where there is some kind of power imbalance between the individuals involved.

Bullying behaviours include: name calling, public humiliation, deliberately leaving someone out of a communication loop such as an email list, assigning someone meaningless tasks, stealing ideas, taking credit for another person's work and spreading rumours.

According to the School of Risk and Safety Sciences at the University of New South Wales, harassment is unsolicited behaviour(s) that is/are offensive, humiliating or intimidating and relevant to some characteristic of the individual (as spelt out in the anti-discrimination legislation such as race, age, sex, sexuality, marital status, disability etc.).

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