



MEDIA RELEASE

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BULLYING INQUIRY SLAMS WORKCOVER CULTURE

The Public Service Association of NSW (PSA) welcomes today's findings and recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the bullying culture that exists in WorkCover which seriously damages the credibility of the NSW workplace safety regulator.

Today's report confirms what staff at WorkCover have known and loathed for many years, that a serious culture of bullying exists in the authority.

"Several of the key recommendations in today's report highlight the importance of involving the Public Service Association in order to prevent this type of culture occurring in other public sector agencies", said PSA General Secretary, Anne Gardiner.

The Inquiry was in response to a successful prosecution by the Public Service Association in defence of its member Wayne Butler who had been brutally bullied from his position in the organisation.

In the Industrial Relations Commission Deputy President Harrison was scathing and found that "the termination of Mr Butler's employment [was] harsh, unreasonable and unjust".

From the bench his Honour commented, words to the effect that "in 26 years on the bench I struggle to find an example where someone has been dealt with more unfairly or unjustly".

He further commented that Mr Butler had been used as "a scapegoat for systemic management failure and as a sacrifice to an application of policy and procedure in a draconian way which countenances no innocent explanation".

Surveys of WorkCover staff over recent years have consistently shown high levels of bullying, with 40-50% of employees reporting that they have witnessed instances of bullying but no effective action was taken by management.

The bullying problem in the organisation has worsened significantly in recent years with cuts to staffing levels, the State Government's reduced consultation with the PSA and across-the-board restructuring creating a "perfect storm" of risk factors for bullying and intimidation.

"When a bullying culture has become prevalent at the NSW workplace safety regulator, which is meant to ensure safety, health and well being across the state, it's surely time for a serious fresh new look at how the issue is dealt with," said Ms Gardiner.