

Rural Fire Service bulletin

Bullying - Work Health & Safety and your Award

The Public Service Association (PSA) is continuing in its fight to have the Rural Fire Service (RFS) address its bullying problem. The 2014 People Matter Survey confirmed the extent of the issue: 49 percent of RFS respondents had witnessed bullying in the past 12 months and 29 percent had experienced bullying in the same period.

The PSA recently provided a comprehensive submission to *Respectful and Inclusive Workplace*, the RFS draft service standard that deals with bullying. This draft service standard in its current form is a backward step in addressing the problem and is inferior to the policy it will replace.

The draft lacks any strategy to deal with the causes of bullying and fails to address the real issue; that RFS staff have little or no confidence their complaint will be handled quickly, fairly and confidentially, or that it will have any positive result. In fact, staff fear that if a complaint is made it will lead to victimisation and a worsening of the bullying behaviour.

In conjunction with your RFS delegates, the PSA has commenced two initiatives that should have an impact on this very serious problem:

We have requested the election of Health and Safety Representatives and the establishment of a Workplace Health and Safety Committee. Bullying is a work health and safety issue. To combat it, the RFS needs appropriate processes and mechanisms in place to address it.

We have notified the RFS of our intention to renegotiate your Award. Bullying behaviour flourishes in environments where entitlements are vague and where duties and systems of work are unclear.

The RFS has changed significantly since the Award was created in 2001 and a modernisation is well overdue. The PSA will be in contact with you again soon to get your views about your Award and what you would like to see changed.

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