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MEDIA RELEASE – IMMEDIATE USE

Billions Lost to Bullying

Seventy per cent of employees are currently being bullied or have been bullied in the past. Workplace bullying alone is estimated by Griffith University to cost Australian business between \$17 - 36 billion every year in direct costs including absenteeism, litigation and increased accident/work error rate and indirect costs including lost productivity and rehabilitation costs. The collateral impacts are known to lead to dysfunctional families, significant falloffs in productivity in the workplace and other forms of social dislocation.

These behaviours impact on workers in all levels of employment and classifications. It is not a phenomenon unique to Australia or Western Australia but rather one that has swept the world as a safety and health issue. However, bullying is not a new issue.

Bullying, harassment and other inappropriate behaviours are now recognised as workplace hazards with the potential to cause serious illness. There are endless permutations of bullying. A UK expert suggests there are over 75 different types of bullying behaviour.

Many covert forms of bullying have been identified in recent years. These can occur within a workgroup or line management and can indeed permeate all levels of an organisation. Complainants are often seen as the problem rather than the people being adversely impacted by the bullying with little empathy shown towards them.

Management who acquiesce to these behaviours on the basis their line management are high achievers are totally misguided. Their acceptance of these behaviours at the expense of the health and wellbeing of their workforce is extremely short-sighted and regrettable. If left unchecked, it will ultimately have the opposite effect, as the damage permeates the rest of the workforce and morale diminishes or evaporates altogether.

It is essential there be both formal and informal policies and procedures in place for people to resolve bullying issues supported by the sharing of information and the provision of training to the entire workforce.

IFAP, a non-government, not-for-profit, member based organisation which provides services to improve safety and health at work, is tackling this issue head-on.

IFAP has, through its Corporate Social Responsibility Team, designed a range of Drama Based Learning Interventions to assist workplaces in the process of evaluating bullying risks and to promote the necessary changes at the workplace level.

IFAP has also established a web based online bullying survey for members of the community to record their experiences, visit www.ifap.asn.au. The survey results will be placed into a secure database so a contemporary demographic profile of bullying in Western Australia can be obtained.

It is believed this is the first survey developed to assist in this process. To stop bullying in your workplace and for more information call IFAP on (08) 9221 9200.

This media release is available on IFAP's website at:
www.ifap.asn.au/publications/inthenews.html

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