TOUGH NEW PLAN TO CRACK DOWN ON BULLYING IN HOSPITALS

A flying squad of independent anti-bullying specialists and experts will be deployed to Victoria’s hospitals as part of the Andrews Labor Government’s plan to crack down on bullying and harassment in our health system.

Bullying and harassment have no place in Victoria’s health system and under the Government’s tough new bullying and harassment strategy, hospitals and agencies will be held to account to ensure it is stamped out.

Last year the Minister for Health, Jill Hennessy, requested the Victorian Auditor-General investigate the nature and extent of bullying and harassment in the public health system and identify opportunities for change.

This report was recently tabled in Parliament and exposed a culture of bullying and harassment across Victoria’s health system. The Government’s new strategy, Our pathway to change: Eliminating bullying and harassment in healthcare, was developed in response to this report.

As part of the new plan, the Government will:

- Establish an independent anti-bullying flying squad to identify and crack down on health services with poor workplace culture and elevated rates of bullying and harassment
- Deliver education and support health service boards, leaders and the workforce to prevent bullying and harassment as an occupational health and safety risk
- Hold health services to account for reducing the risk and incidence of bullying through performance monitoring and, if necessary, Ministerial direction
- Audit the health workforce through sector wide participation in the People Matters Survey to identify hot spots of bullying and harassment

The implementation of the plan will be overseen by an advisory committee led by former Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner and current CEO of Oxfam Australia, Helen Szoke.

It will bring together hospitals, unions, colleges, Australian Medical Association Victoria, Worksafe, the Victorian Public Sector Commission and other stakeholders to tackle this insidious problem.

The Government is determined to ensure every Victorian has access to the very best health care, and that our hospitals and healthcare organisations are safe, respectful and healthy places to work.

Everyone is entitled to work in a safe and professional environment and it is vital that health care staff feel supported to raise concerns and make complaints without fear of reprisal.

The strategy can be viewed at https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/dhhs-eliminating-bullying-and-harassment-strategy

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jill Hennessy

“We are determined to ensure the insidious, unacceptable and unlawful nature of workplace bullying will become a thing of the past in our hospitals.”

“Our health care workers are entitled to go about their work free of harassment and bullying, and where a culture of respect is non-negotiable.”

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“Our tough new plan will hold health services to account, and protect our workers. No change is not an option.”

Quotes attributable to Oxfam Australia CEO Helen Szoke

“I am honoured that I have been invited to Chair the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services Bullying and Harassment Advisory Group.”

“As head of Oxfam we work globally to ensure the rights of people are protected. This should happen both at home and abroad. I am pleased to contribute to this work.”