

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace  
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2012-2013**

**Agency - Safe Work Australia**

**DEEWR Question No. EW0619\_13**

**Senator Abetz asked on 17 October 2012 , Hansard page 46**

**Question**

**SWA - Bullying in workplace**

Senator ABETZ: Is it fair to say that the majority of bullying that occurs in the workplace is, in fact, between peers on a similar level? Ms Grey: I do not know if that is fair to say. I would have to have a closer look at the report and provide an answer to you on notice. Senator ABETZ: If you could do that and give us your analysis of that that would be very helpful. Management bullying of employees, one would imagine, is an area over which management should and needs to have absolute control. But some of the subtle bullying that takes place, such as in the typing pool in the old days, or the occasion of some Commonwealth public servants having a brawl in Canberra about who was first in the coffee line, is ugly and should not occur et cetera. But how do you, as an employer, seek to control that? It is, I suppose, an issue that I personally would like to get a better grasp of. If you could supply the information that you indicated earlier, that would be very helpful.

**Answer**

*Safe Work Australia has provided the following response:*

Research on the source of bullying is limited.

Results from Safe Work Australia's National Hazard Exposure Worker Surveillance 2008 survey found that 48 per cent of respondents who reported having experienced bullying had been bullied by a supervisor/manager. Forty per cent of respondents who reported having experienced bullying had been bullied by a co-worker.

The People at Work study by the University of Queensland and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland was organisation-based research on the source of bullying from 2009-2011. In a sample of 6406 Queensland employees, the most prevalent source of bullying was reported to be co-workers (38%), followed by clients (30%) and supervisors (22%). Subordinates were rated as the source in 6% of cases.

The Australian Public Service Commission conducts an annual State of the Service survey which collects data on matters across the whole of the Australian Public Service. The 2010-11 survey results which are the latest publicly available report that senior people or supervisors are mostly responsible for harassment/bullying (41% respectively) followed by co-workers (30%). Figures for the 2011-12 survey were due to be released at the end of November 2012.