The key step to an ethical culture: linking workplace bullying and corruption

Andrew Patterson
Internal Ombudsman, Warringah Council
APSACC, Sydney, November 2013
“Unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it.”

William Pitt, 1770
Bullying

- Unfair & unreasonable treatment
- Aggression, intimidation, threats, belittlement, humiliation, harassment
- Focus on behaviours
- 1 in 3 are bullied
- Australia: Costs between $6B and $36B
Corruption

• Dishonesty & greed
• Bribery, fraud, theft, embezzlement, favours, decisions
• Focus on outcomes
Bullying & Corruption

- Obsession with SELF
- Disdain for others
- Disdain for rules
- Lack of RESPECT
- Abuse of position and power
- Workplace Deviance
- Both cost Australian economy $B’s each year
The Usual Disconnect

Reflecting on your organizations:

• Q: How do you treat bullying?

• Q: How do you treat corruption?
The Usual Disconnect

• Bullying is relegated to being an HR grievance issue
• Codes of Conduct are too limited
• We have developed a mature view towards corruption, but we lag behind on bullying
• Both are seriously damaging to organizations
• Both cost a huge amount of $$$
• Both reflect poorly on us as human beings
• The Disconnect: we fail to recognize the overlap
Why the Disconnect

• It’s all too grey?
• It’s about behaviour rather than money?
• It’s likely to involve interpersonal conflict?
• We’ll have to make some value judgements?
• We’ll have to reflect on our own behaviours?
• As a society we have been enculturated into accepting bullying as a legitimate exercise of power?
The Interrelation

• Bullying to Enable Corruption

• Bullying to hold a Power Base
The Interrelation

• Bullying to Cover Up Corruption

• Bullying leading to Corruption
The Interrelation

- Bullying to Socialize into Norms of Corruption
- Bullying to Punish Whistleblowers
The Warringah Approach

• Bullying is classed as serious misconduct
• Anti-bullying provisions specified in the Code of Conduct
• Primary responsibility for dealing with bullying rests with Internal Ombudsman, not HR
• Mandatory training: “A Bully-Free Warringah”
“A Bully-Free Warringah”

- Mandatory for all, including management
- Face to face workshops
- Sponsored by the General Manager
- Since February 2011 – over 800 staff trained (~80%)
- Defines bullying and harassment
- Teaches behaviours
- Establishes reporting and advice mechanisms
- Develops trust & promotes respect
Warringah – Internal Reporting

• 2008-2009: 10 (13.2%) T=76

  Early 2010 - New anti-bullying framework introduced:

• 2009-2010: 28 (17.5%) T=160
• 2010-2011: 53 (21.0%) T=252
• 2011-2012: 63 (28.5%) T=221
• 2012-2013: 80 (46.8%) T=171
Culture: Lessons & Approaches

• Zero tolerance of serious misconduct
• Corruption & Bullying – both serious misconduct
• Autonomous and proactive watchdog is essential
Culture: Lessons & Approaches

• Corruption is insidious and multi-faceted
• So is Bullying
• Corruption has to be addressed through the culture
• So does Bullying
• They both thrive on FEAR & SILENCE
Culture: Lessons & Approaches

• An ethical culture will only survive and thrive in a broader healthy organisational culture
• Workplace bullying is a significant factor in poor culture
• Staff who feel aggrieved either through perceived unfairness or due to a culture of bullying, fear and silence will not regard ethics as a priority
Culture: Lessons & Approaches

• Approach and message – must be consistent and comprehensive

• Corruption and Bullying drive poor culture & arise from poor culture

• Corruption and Bullying are both self-sustaining if not tackling head on

• A holistic approach is crucial – Integrated & Systematic
Further Reading


Further Reading


Further Reading


Closing words

“I have tried as best I could to be a man with an ethic, and that is what cost me most.”

Albert Camus, 1958