

Expert Advisory Group on discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment

Advising The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

Media Release



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN
COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

EAG calls for submissions on Issues Paper

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The silence of bystanders, the culture of surgery and fears of reprisal from making complaints are critical issues in discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the practice of surgery, according to an Issues Paper published today.

The Expert Advisory Group established by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons is now calling for submissions to the Issues Paper, which summarises research into discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the practice of surgery.

The Issues Paper aims to trigger debate and find solutions that will prevent and address discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the practice of surgery.

It explores the link between gender inequity and discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment, questions the influence of 'the boys' club' and examines why complaints about these issues are under-reported.

The Issues Paper draws on published research on these problems, summarised in a Background Briefing, which found:

- Discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace occur in many countries and many workplace environments.
- Despite the fact that discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace have been prohibited by law for decades, these behaviours continue to be endemic in the medical work environment.
- Trainees, medical students, female staff and colleagues have been identified as the most likely targets or victims.
- Surgeons as a group have been commonly identified as perpetrators.
- Onlookers and observers can be both co-victims and co-supporters of discrimination and bullying.
- Some workplaces support a 'culture of abuse' through a wide range of covert sanctions, including bystanders failing to act and disincentives for change.

EAG Chair, Rob Knowles AO, hopes the Issues Paper will trigger lively discussion.

'We want to hear from people at the front line and tap the expertise of health practitioners about possible solutions,' Mr Knowles said.

'We want to make sure our understanding of these important issues lines up with what's really happening in operating theatres and the health workplace,' Mr Knowles said.

The Issues Paper and the Background Briefing are published [here](#).

Submissions are open until 20 July 2015 and can be emailed to EAG@surgeons.org

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