

# Respect@Ahpra framework

## Introduction

Respectful workplaces are built through the values we hold and the way we behave towards each other every day. Everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. Ahpra aims to create respectful workplaces that ensure people are treated as individuals, respected for their unique attributes, and not excluded, harassed or bullied in any way, through unconscious bias, stereotypes or unlawful actions that may form the basis of discrimination, harassment, violence, vilification or victimisation. We are committed to providing safe, inclusive and respectful workplaces where everyone feels valued and supported to speak up when disrespectful, inappropriate and/or unlawful behaviour (conduct) is observed.

Respect is enshrined within the National Scheme Strategy 2020–25 and within Ahpra's Values. Ahpra also has a positive duty embedded in Commonwealth and state/territory-based work, health and safety (WHS), industrial relations and anti-discrimination legislation to take proactive steps that ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all workers, by eliminating risks so far as is reasonably practicable, or by reducing those risks as far as is reasonably practicable. **That means that disrespectful and/or inappropriate workplace behaviour may be considered unlawful as prescribed by the policies that comprise this framework.**

Ahpra's commitment to developing and maintaining respectful workplaces is to be achieved through a combination of policy, processes and learning opportunities to increase worker awareness, understanding, capability and confidence in building and maintaining a respectful workplace.

This framework acknowledges:

- that various types of disrespectful behaviour may take place at the same time (for example, bullying, victimisation, harassment and sexual harassment may occur together)
- that policies and procedures alone won't successfully address disrespectful behaviour. Education, ongoing training and awareness programs are vitally important for achieving behaviour change, and
- that the policies underpinning the framework give effect to our legal duties and are reasonable and proportionate to achieve our aspirations of respect in the workplace.

To help workers navigate the standards that apply, the Respect@Ahpra framework (the framework) provides an overview of the specific policies, processes and guidelines that help shape respectful workplace behaviour and prevent disrespectful, inappropriate and/or unlawful behaviour, as well as the mechanisms for responding to instances where someone's behaviour may fall short of the standards.

For the purposes of this framework, disrespectful or inappropriate workplace behaviour means any kind of behaviour that is unprofessional, uncivil, rude, unpleasant, disturbing, demeaning or offensive to others in the workplace. The framework uses the terms 'disrespectful' and 'inappropriate' throughout to ensure that the full spectrum of unacceptable workplace behaviour is captured by Ahpra's policies and within the framework. Not all disrespectful or inappropriate workplace behaviour will be unlawful; however, stamping out unacceptable behaviour in the workplace is essential to providing and maintaining safe, inclusive and respectful workplaces.

## Scope

The Respect@Ahpra framework (including the related policies and procedure) applies to all Ahpra workers, defined in accordance with [Definitions – people policies and procedures PC002](#) as a person who carries out work with Ahpra including: the Ahpra Board, National Executive, employees, contractors, agency workers, volunteers, interns, work experience staff and statutory employees (board, committee and panel members).

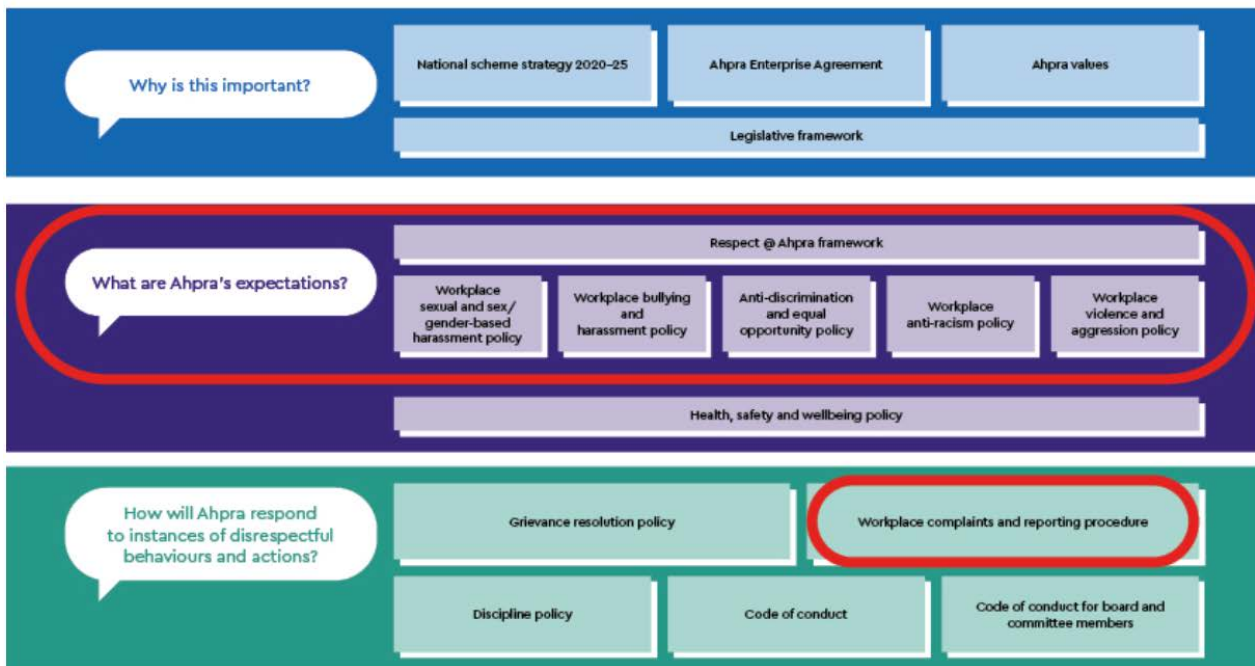
It applies to all workers at any time when they are engaging in work duties, interacting with others while working, and/or when they are at the workplace (including when engaging with others over technology, working remotely, and/or when at social or off-site events in connection with their work). The policy extends to prospective workers at Ahpra, and members of the public or a registered health practitioner or student in their dealings with Ahpra.

## Respect@Ahpra framework

The framework (shown below) has three tiers:

- the first tier refers to the strategies, values and legislation that inform Ahpra’s commitment to developing and maintaining respectful workplaces (the ‘why’)
- the second tier outlines Ahpra’s policies that establish clear expectations about appropriate behaviour (the ‘what’), and
- the third tier highlights policies and procedures that outline how Ahpra will respond to inappropriate behaviour or actions (the ‘how’).

## Respect @ Ahpra framework



## Guiding principles

### 1. Respect

As well as complying with the policies under the framework, workers must treat each other and those with whom we interact with respect by:

- considering the rights and dignity of others at all times
- always using appropriate and respectful language

Respect@Ahpra framework

- being honest, fair, and reasonable when dealing with or making decisions that affect others
- behaving ethically, with honesty and integrity
- embracing diversity and being inclusive
- being aware of the differences in personal backgrounds, characteristics, beliefs, and values that may influence an individual's response to disrespectful behaviour, and
- speaking up and addressing behaviour that can lead to bullying, discrimination, harassment, victimisation or violence to support action in compliance with the principles of respect.

Managers and People and Culture have a leading role to play in responding to feedback, concerns and complaints with empathy and respect so that workers do not feel discouraged or as though they will be treated differently for doing what is right, reasonable, and fair.

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

Refer to the table in Appendix 1 of the framework.

## 3. Active bystander obligations

Bystanders are people who see or hear disrespectful, inappropriate or unlawful behaviour firsthand or who hear of the incident after it occurs. While bystanders may not be the direct target of inappropriate behaviour, they may still suffer the impacts as an indirect party to the event or situation. Ahpra uses the term 'active bystander' instead of 'witness' to describe the role a person plays in an incident to reflect that there isn't always a legal obligation to act in certain circumstances, but always a moral obligation. Ahpra encourages all workers to be active bystanders by recognising a potentially harmful situation or interaction and choosing to respond in a way that could positively influence the outcome.

Ahpra encourages reasonable and safe actions by those who see or are told about an incident of disrespectful behaviour in line with our Workplace complaints and reporting procedure.

Under Australian workplace laws, including WHS and anti-discrimination legislation, Ahpra must be able to establish that all reasonable steps were taken to prevent and respond appropriately to disrespectful workplace behaviour, including setting clear expectations for bystanders that recognise there is a collective responsibility to provide a safe working environment for all.

## 4. Creating respectful workplace cultures

Our wellbeing is significantly influenced by the culture of our workplaces and the way people speak to each other and behave. Disrespectful or inappropriate workplace behaviour can have detrimental impacts on the wellbeing of those who experience it and may contribute to an unfavourable and unsafe workplace culture. In addition, individuals who experience disrespectful behaviour are likely to suffer lower job satisfaction and decreased work performance. While some disrespectful behaviours may be more overt and direct, more subtle and indirect examples include incivility and microaggressions which undermine the principles of mutual respect.

- **Incivility** can be described as general rudeness and display of disrespect towards others, and although it is more low-key than a blatant act of violence, it can still produce severely negative impacts on those who are involved directly or indirectly.
- **Microaggression** is a subtle, often unintentional, form of [prejudice](#). Rather than an overt declaration of racism or sexism, a microaggression often takes the shape of an offhand comment, an inadvertently painful joke, or a pointed insult.

People take cues from how others behave in the workplace. If there is no accountability, these kinds of behaviours can become widespread, creating an environment where people are afraid to speak up. As part of promoting a culture where respect is central to how we operate, everyone feels safe and supported at all times, all workers are encouraged to speak up and raise issues using the options included in the Workplace complaints and reporting procedure.

## 5. Responding to disrespectful, inappropriate or unlawful behaviour

When disrespectful, inappropriate or unlawful behaviour occurs, it can affect a person's mental health and wellbeing. It is important that such incidents are taken seriously.

Ahpra does not tolerate disrespectful, inappropriate or unlawful behaviour. This means that Ahpra will be proactive in eradicating the behaviour and that there will be action and consequences that are appropriate and proportionate to the behaviour, taking into account the impact of the behaviour and the wishes of the person subjected to the behaviour.

We encourage workers to report disrespectful, inappropriate or unlawful behaviour by:

- referring to the relevant policies and guidelines to understand the thresholds of disrespectful, inappropriate or unlawful behaviour
- seeking support if necessary because experiencing or observing such behaviour can be distressing
- seeking guidance from a manager, People and Culture Business Partner or Respect Officer so they can help you navigate reporting processes and next steps.

More generally, it is important that there is a supportive culture for reporting any hazards affecting physical or psychological wellbeing and that this is enabled by management. Workers can (and should) be made to feel supported to speak up by:

- seeing that Ahpra treats all reports of psychosocial or physical hazards seriously and appropriately
- having access to mechanisms and procedures to disclose or make complaints about disrespectful, inappropriate or unlawful behaviour
- ensuring managers are regularly discussing psychosocial and physical hazards at team meetings
- providing workers with a range of accessible and user-friendly ways to make both informal and formal reports
- making it clear that we will not tolerate victimising anyone who chooses to make a complaint, is believed to have made a complaint, or helped someone else to make a complaint
- providing high-quality training to managers, Ahpra's Respect Officers and Business Partners to help them respond when an incident occurs
- ensuring the policies that comprise Respect@Ahpra are clear and well understood
- acting decisively to control the risks identified by workers, to work towards eliminating disrespectful, inappropriate and unlawful behaviour.

## 6. Trauma-informed approach to decision making

Ahpra adopts a trauma-informed and gender-responsive approach that emphasises the following throughout the decision-making process:

- Safety – is Ahpra providing a safe and healthy workplace? Do all parties feel physically and psychologically safe? Is the physical environment safe? Do interpersonal interactions promote a sense of emotional safety? Is the environment culturally safe? Are the right people involved in the conversation? Are the right supports available?
- Choice – is there opportunity for choice as to how issues are resolved?
- Collaboration – is there a sense of 'doing with' rather than 'doing to'? Can power imbalances be levelled to support shared decision-making in the process and outcomes?
- Trustworthiness – is Ahpra's response sensitive to needs for compassion, privacy, action and follow-through? Is Ahpra's response maximising trustworthiness through transparency, clarity and consistency?
- Empowerment – has Ahpra provided the information for people to make an informed decision about what action they wish to take?

As part of a trauma-informed approach, decisions directed at resolving workplace issues will reflect awareness that disrespectful, inappropriate or unlawful behaviour identified in the policies that underpin the framework can cause serious harm, with trauma manifesting in different ways which may affect the person's work including:

- shock and denial
- fear
- silence
- anxiety/panic/flashbacks
- depression
- guilt and blame
- low self-esteem/loss of confidence, and

Respect@Ahpra framework

- loss of trust.

Ahpra will provide support for all parties involved or affected by the disrespectful, inappropriate and/or unlawful conduct. This may include:

- those to whom the conduct is directed or who are affected by the disrespectful and inappropriate conduct
- witnesses, and
- the individual/s who are the subject of the allegations, who may have engaged in inappropriate behaviour/conduct.

This support will be provided as soon as Ahpra becomes aware of the conduct and will continue during any process associated with responding to the conduct and for as long as is needed, while the affected people are employed/engaged by Ahpra. Support may include access to:

- Ahpra's Employee Assistance Provider
- managers and/or People and Culture Business Partners
- leave
- changes to work pattern
- time off work to attend specialist support and/or counselling services
- facilitation services to restore workplace relationships where safe to do so
- any other support services requested by the individual that the Executive Director People and Culture considers appropriate.

## 7. A person-centred approach to workplace issues

Ahpra is also committed to taking a person-centred approach to responding to disrespectful, inappropriate or unlawful workplace behaviour. A person-centred approach means placing people – who experience the behaviour – at the centre of any response to the conduct. It's about listening to, empowering and supporting people who are affected by that behaviour.

A person-centred approach means the affected person chooses how they wish to report it and is involved in the decision about how to handle the issue. It respects the wishes and best interests of the person affected but does not mean they solely decide the organisation's response or consequences because the organisation still owes a duty of care to others. A person-centred approach also recognises that people will share their experience when they feel comfortable and that it may take people time to process what has happened and feel ready to talk. It also prioritises early intervention and supports workers, when they feel safe and comfortable to do so, to raise issues directly. A person-centred approach provides multiple avenues for people to raise their concerns and avoids making them outline their concerns multiple times to multiple people.

## 8. Restorative justice

Through the Workplace complaints and reporting procedure, when a person about whom the complaint is made (the respondent) is found to have done wrong and when agreed by the complainant and considered a safe course of action, the Executive Director People and Culture may approve the use of specialist external mediation services to encourage the respondent to take responsibility in accordance with the principles of restorative justice – **safety, respect, responsibility, repair**.

Consideration will be given to the attitude of the respondent and whether they display genuine remorse for their conduct, so they do not cause further psychological injury to the person affected by their conduct and so Ahpra has confidence that the conduct won't be repeated.

## 9. Victimisation

Victimisation is against the law. Victimisation is subjecting or threatening to subject someone to a detriment because they have asserted their rights under equal opportunity and anti-discrimination law, made a complaint, helped someone else make a complaint, or refused to do something because it would be discrimination, sexual harassment or victimisation. Victimisation can also occur where someone is threatened (such as a witness/bystander) in circumstances where they may be involved in an investigation of a complaint.

The prohibition on victimising conduct also applies to detrimental conduct that occurs when a person exercises a workplace right or makes a safety complaint.

Ahpra does not tolerate victimisation. This means that we will be proactive in eradicating all forms of victimisation and that there will be action and consequences that are appropriate and proportionate to the conduct, taking into account the impact of the conduct and the wishes of the person subjected to the conduct.

## 10. Support

In addition to the support provided by managers and People and Culture, Ahpra offers confidential and free support through our [Employee Assistance Provider \(EAP\)](#).

As part of the implementation of Respect@Ahpra, we are establishing a network of Respect Officers specially trained to assist with triaging of incidents.

Respect Officers (sometimes referred to in other organisations or industries as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Contact Officers) play a pivotal role in implementing the Respect@Ahpra framework. They act as a contact for employees who wish to raise concerns about inappropriate behaviour with a colleague rather than through more formal channels.

Ahpra's Respect Officers are trained to provide confidential information and support to other employees with concerns about discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation. Their role is not to advocate for individuals or take action to resolve a complaint. Instead, their role is to offer options and referrals that help employees to determine the steps they wish to take in response to an issue of concern.

## 11. Privacy and confidentiality

Ahpra will keep information relating to any report or complaint about disrespectful behaviour confidential to protect a worker's privacy as much as possible.

Information will only be shared with third parties when required to comply with the law, to obtain legal advice, to report a matter to the police, to facilitate access to support services or to allow for investigation into a report or complaint.

In some instances, a matter may need to be referred upward internally (to those who need to be informed to take steps to ensure that the workplace is safe) or referred to a third party, in circumstances that may/do:

- constitute a criminal offence
- constitute a health, safety or wellbeing risk, or
- require disciplinary action.

## 12. Learning and development

Ahpra recognises that setting standards alone will not necessarily drive positive behaviour that creates a respectful working environment. It is important that we carry out regular training to help workers unlearn any behaviour that contributes to workplace disrespect, with a focus on awareness, knowledge, intent and action.

The Respect@Ahpra learning suite contains several modules that we expect all Ahpra workers to complete annually. Failure to complete these mandatory training modules may result in disciplinary action.

Ahpra recognises that being a witness to disrespectful, inappropriate or unlawful conduct can be a traumatic experience, particularly if there is an intention to assist but uncertainty about how to do so. Consequently, People and Culture will provide information and regular training to build the capability of bystanders to understand their role in intervening, supporting and reporting – and how to do it safely.



## 13. Reporting

### National Executive

People and Culture will provide a quarterly report to Ahpra's National Executive to enable them to identify any systemic issues of disrespect, so they can make any changes to systems, processes and leadership that are necessary to ensure these systemic issues are addressed and the behaviour is not repeated.

Ahpra has reporting obligations across jurisdictions, such as notifiable incidents to safety regulators, and these must be complied with.

## 14. Non-compliance with Ahpra's policies

When behaviour warrants investigation and a person is found to have acted disrespectfully or inappropriately/unlawfully, the matter is to be handled in accordance with [Ahpra's Discipline policy](#).

## Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Worker</b>	A person who carries out work for Ahpra, including: National Executive, employees, contractors and agency staff, volunteers, interns, work experience staff and statutory appointees (board, committee and panel members)

## Related documents

- Ahpra Enterprise Agreement 2022–2025
- Complaints and reporting procedure
- [PC011 - Code of conduct](#)
- Code of conduct for board and committee members
- [HSW014 – Health, safety and wellbeing policy](#)
- [HSW010 - HSW responsibilities guideline](#)
- [Privacy policy](#)
- Anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policy
- Workplace bullying and harassment policy
- Workplace violence and aggression policy
- [Information and IT acceptable use policy – Ahpra staff – IS002](#)
- [Information and IT acceptable use policy – Board and committee members IS010](#)
- Grievance policy
- Discipline policy
- Workplace sexual, sex and gender-based harassment policy

## Relevant legislation

- *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth)
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)
- *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth)
- *Discrimination Act 1991* (ACT)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW)
- *The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Sexual Consent Reforms) Act 2021* (NSW)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1966* (NT)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (SA)
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998* (Tas)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (Vic)

- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)*
- *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 (NT)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Tas)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA), and*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*

<b>Document control</b>	
<b>Approval authority</b>	Ahpra Board
<b>Policy owner (administrative)</b>	Executive Director People and Culture
<b>Responsible officer (ND)</b>	National Director Organisational Capability
<b>Approval date</b>	18 July 2023
<b>Start date</b>	11 September 2023
<b>Next review due date</b>	11 September 2026



# Appendix 1

## Roles and responsibilities

Responsible	Accountable for
Ahpra Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exercising due diligence to ensure Ahpra complies with its WHS, anti-discrimination, equal opportunity and industrial relations duties under the relevant legislation outlined in the framework</li> <li>• establishing the principles to meet the positive duty in the discharge of their Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) responsibilities</li> <li>• setting and monitoring strategic objectives and targets for Ahpra's compliance with policy and ensuring so far as reasonably practicable that those targets and objectives are met</li> <li>• ensuring that Ahpra continues to close the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, through Indigenous-led and culturally safe programs to collect, analyse and address information about racist incidents</li> <li>• actively encouraging the reporting of disrespectful, inappropriate and unlawful behaviour as defined by the Respect@Ahpra policy suite and near-miss incidents to prevent further occurrence in all Ahpra workplaces, including remote working environments, in a timely manner</li> <li>• employing or engaging suitably qualified or experienced individuals or organisations to provide advice, support and expertise relating to culture, performance or reporting which supports the implementation and maintenance of this Respect@Ahpra policy suite</li> <li>• modelling respectful behaviour, actions and decisions</li> <li>• being aware of their moral obligation to be an active bystander and taking safe, appropriate action as a result of observing or being informed of disrespectful behaviour identified in Ahpra's policies.</li> </ul>
National Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exercising due diligence to ensure Ahpra complies with its WHS, anti-discrimination, equal opportunity and industrial relations duties under the relevant legislation outlined in the framework</li> <li>• providing and maintaining a policy and procedural framework which establishes Ahpra's expectations about the prevention of disrespectful behaviour in all its forms</li> <li>• developing processes for employees and external parties to report disrespectful behaviour</li> <li>• documenting and reporting disrespectful behaviour so this may be monitored and rectified</li> <li>• providing individuals with appropriate training necessary to support them to carry out their roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• supporting activities that contribute to a culture of Respect@Ahpra</li> <li>• modelling respectful behaviour, actions and decisions</li> <li>• actively encouraging the reporting of disrespectful, inappropriate and unlawful behaviour as defined by the Respect@Ahpra policy suite and near-miss incidents to prevent further occurrence in all Ahpra workplaces, including remote working environments, in a timely manner</li> <li>• being aware of their moral obligation to be an active bystander and taking safe, appropriate action as a result of observing or being informed of disrespectful behaviour identified in Ahpra's policies.</li> </ul>
People and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring people activities are conducted in accordance with legislative frameworks and policies</li> <li>• documenting and reporting disrespectful behaviour to National Executive and Ahpra Board to assist them in complying with the legislative obligations and duties</li> <li>• supporting managers and workers to understand their workplace responsibilities and rights</li> <li>• helping to identify potential patterns of disrespectful behaviour that require action at a broader organisational level</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing strategic advice and guidance on best practice ways to address disrespectful behaviour</li> <li>• modelling respectful behaviour, actions and decisions</li> <li>• monitoring the work environment for signs of disrespectful behaviour</li> <li>• actively encouraging the reporting of disrespectful, inappropriate and unlawful behaviour as defined by the Respect@Ahpra policy suite and near-miss incidents to prevent further occurrence in all Ahpra workplaces, including remote working environments, in a timely manner</li> <li>• being aware of their moral obligation to be an active bystander and taking safe, appropriate action as a result of observing or being informed of disrespectful behaviour identified in Ahpra's policies.</li> </ul>
Managers (including State and Territory managers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring workers are aware of the requirements of the policies and procedures that comprise Respect@Ahpra and the consequences of non-compliance with the policies</li> <li>• sharing responsibility to prevent and respond to disrespectful behaviour in the workplace</li> <li>• documenting and reporting disrespectful behaviour through relevant channels according to the Workplace complaints and reporting procedure so that behaviour may be monitored and rectified</li> <li>• not engaging in conduct that contravenes the policies that comprise Respect@Ahpra</li> <li>• taking reasonable steps to prevent disrespectful behaviour by applying the appropriate Ahpra policies and procedures to communicate clear behavioural standards</li> <li>• ensuring their workers attend relevant training to understand their legal and ethical obligations</li> <li>• modelling respectful behaviour, actions and decisions</li> <li>• monitoring the work environment for signs of disrespectful behaviour</li> <li>• being aware of their moral obligation to be an active bystander and taking safe, appropriate action as a result of observing or being informed of disrespectful behaviour identified in Ahpra's policies</li> <li>• treating disclosures/complaints of disrespectful (and potentially unlawful) behaviour seriously by dealing with them promptly, fairly, impartially and confidentially</li> <li>• discussing any complaint raised by a worker with their senior leader as appropriate to ensure they are aware and can also provide support to the manager</li> <li>• contacting a People and Culture Business Partner for advice and support on the appropriate management of disclosures and complaints in the workplace</li> <li>• actively encouraging the reporting of disrespectful, inappropriate and unlawful behaviour as defined by the Respect@Ahpra policy suite and near-miss incidents to prevent further occurrence in all Ahpra workplaces, including remote working environments, in a timely manner</li> <li>• monitoring team-based practices and processes to ensure they are consistent with the principles of Respect@Ahpra.</li> </ul>
Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preventing and responding to disrespectful behaviour in the workplace</li> <li>• complying with Respect@Ahpra, the <i>Code of conduct</i> and related policies and procedures</li> <li>• not engaging in conduct that contravenes the policies that comprise Respect@Ahpra</li> <li>• taking reasonable care of their health, safety and wellbeing and not adversely affecting the health, safety and wellbeing of others</li> <li>• reflecting on how their behaviour could affect others before acting, noting that some comments, actions and decisions could be considered unlawful even if there was no intent to be disrespectful</li> <li>• participating in training provided by Ahpra in support of Respect@Ahpra</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• being aware of their moral obligation to be an active bystander and taking safe, appropriate action as a result of observing or being informed of disrespectful behaviour identified in Ahpra's policies</li><li>• communicating with their respective managers or People and Culture representatives when they are uncertain about any requirements under the Respect@Ahpra framework and policies</li><li>• modelling respectful behaviour, actions and decisions</li><li>• actively encouraging the reporting of disrespectful, inappropriate and unlawful behaviour as defined by the Respect@Ahpra policy suite and near-miss incidents to prevent further occurrence in all Ahpra workplaces, including remote working environments, in a timely manner.</li></ul>
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