

## Message from ACEM President, Professor Anthony Lawler

Every health professional has a right to work in a safe, supportive workplace free of harassment. Bullying and discrimination, of any kind, have no place in any aspect of emergency medicine.

The College Board, along with the Council of Advocacy, Practice and Partnerships, has taken the initiative to investigate the prevalence of discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment affecting our members and trainees. The Discrimination Bullying and Sexual Harassment (DBSH) Working Group was established in 2016 to undertake this important work. An independent, confidential and anonymous survey of all ACEM trainees, Fellows, Specialist International Medical Graduates, Certificants and Diplomates was conducted between April and May this year.

We have received the results of the survey and the findings are confronting. The survey identified that bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment appear to be distressingly common in the emergency care environment in Australia and New Zealand. Thirty-four per cent of respondents said they had experienced bullying; 21.7% experienced discrimination; 16.1% experienced harassment and 6.2% experienced sexual harassment. A summary of the survey's findings is [available here](#).

The behaviour reported in the survey is unacceptable. These behaviours not only pose a risk to the health, safety and professional wellbeing of those who are subjected to it, but also have an adverse effect on the workplace and the training environment, as well as the capacity to provide quality patient care.

It is clear that we have a lot of work to do as a College to address this.

The College owes a duty to the wider emergency medicine community. This includes training an enduring, sustainable emergency medicine workforce that will serve the community's needs, as well as upholding the highest possible professional standards in emergency medicine. That means ensuring emergency medicine is able to be practised in a safe and respectful environment, free from bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment. This is not the case for too many of our trainees and members.

We are committed to taking action on this immediately.

The Working Group has the important task of developing an action plan to address the findings of the survey, and we need your help to do this. In order to help shape an appropriate response to how we drive the necessary cultural change, [the Working Group has developed the attached consultation paper](#).

Please provide your feedback by **5 September 2017**.

Thank you in advance for your contribution to the Action Plan, and commitment to eliminating unacceptable behaviour from our workplaces.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Anthony Lawler**  
**President**