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## Workers' comp claims for harassment and bullying rise, women twice as likely to be affected as men

Workers' compensation claims for bullying, harassment and mental stress rose between 2016 and 2018 according to new data released by Safe Work Australia.

The report released today shows women are twice as likely to be affected by workplace stress, harassment and bullying as well as exposure to occupational violence when compared with men.

However, workers' compensation statistics are just the tip of the iceberg - mental stress claims are significantly underreported in comparison to claims for physical injuries. Almost 67 percent of women who participated in the ACTU's Work Shouldn't Hurt survey said that they experienced poor mental health because their employer failed to properly manage a hazard in their workplace. Of these workers, just under 10 percent went on to make a claim for workers' compensation.

Today's report highlights that the current approaches to workplace mental health are not working, and that reforms are desperately needed. In the Work Shouldn't Hurt survey, 98 per cent of workers said that they were in favour of health and safety regulations which guide employers in dealing with mental health hazards, such as bullying and harassment.

These regulations were a key recommendation in Marie Boland's review of the model WHS laws in 2018. Regulations are also crucial in carrying out the Productivity Commission's recent recommendation of making sure that psychological health and safety is given the same importance as physical in WHS laws, including workers' compensation.

### Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien:

"The rates of mental stress in Australian workplaces are unacceptable and rising. This new data shows just how serious the impact of occupational violence, bullying and harassment and workload are on the mental health of working people and especially women.

"We need new regulations to reduce the levels of psychosocial hazards in the workplace. We cannot simply continue to see more and more working people suffering mental and physical injuries every year.

"No one should face physical or psychological risks at work. Our laws are failing working people's mental health. Our mental health deserves the same level of protection as our physical health. It is time our WHS laws are reflect this."

**ENDS**

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