

# Bullying in hospitals needs 'drastic action'

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Bullying at Waikato's hospitals could be far worse than what has been reported and drastic action needs to be taken now to investigate, health officials have been told.

The revelation came at a Health Waikato Advisory Committee meeting this week and comes as the Waikato Times has been contacted by hospital staff complaining of bullying.

One former staff member said what she went through was so bad she still struggled to drive past the hospital several months after quitting.

"I can only just drive past the hospital now without feeling sick," the woman said.

"Truly. I have a friend's partner in there whose husband was quite sick and she wanted me to go, but I can't.

The Times reported last month that more than a third of the 6000 Waikato DHB staff who filled in their 2012 staff survey had complained of being bullied or harassed.

But at this week's meeting, committee member Andrew Buckley said problems were probably much worse than indicated in that survey. He wanted more questions asked of staff to clearly understand the extent of the problem before action was taken to address it in a "timely fashion".

This was backed by other committee members who said their own family members, who worked at the hospital, had raised concerns.

Committee member Ken Price said he had relatives "who work here who have complained about their experience and what they considered to be bullying".

The committee will meet again in June to decide what further questions could be asked of staff to provide more accurate information.

But the former staff member said the problem was that staff weren't being listened to when they complained of bullying.

She said she had been the victim of bullying by her manager for about six years and had complained about it to the human resources department, along with other members of her department, for about three of those years.

"HR, they should be called the carpet-sweeping department because that's all they seem to do."

The situation got so bad some of her colleagues were crying in their cars at lunchtime.

"But the thing that hurts the most is that no-one cares - that's the saddest thing."

She wanted the DHB to "actually listen to people" because enough people were saying it. "Wake up and smell the roses. You actually have to ask people why they are leaving . . ."

## **WORKPLACE BULLYING**

Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone

Copying emails about someone to others who do not need to know

Physical intimidation

Overbearing supervision or overloading someone with work

Making threats about job security

Using abusive and humiliating language

Exclusion or victimisation or any unfair treatment

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