

A video message from the Chair of the Commission, Chief Justice Ferguson and the Commission's statement about the publication of the Judicial Conduct Guideline on Judicial Bullying.



Video Transcript:

As judicial officers, we are rightly expected to treat all people with respect, both in and out of the courtroom.

For a person who is bullied, it is a debilitating experience. It can leave the person physically ill. It can take them emotionally to their lowest ebb. It can stay with them a long time. It can lead them to abandon a promising career.

It is not an experience that we want people to have in our courts. There is no excuse for judicial bullying. It is unacceptable.

The new guideline published by the Judicial Commission makes clear what judicial bullying is and that it breaches the standards of conduct expected of judicial officers.

It reinforces the core judicial values of impartiality, independence, and integrity. It recognises that court proceedings are contested environments that can be stressful, but it highlights that it is the responsibility of judicial officers to exercise control and restraint.

It also recognises that the workplace of judicial officers extends beyond the courtroom. It includes wherever they attend in their professional capacity. It includes interactions with court staff outside the courtroom.

Equipping judicial officers with the skills they need to deal with the complex work they do in an adversarial environment and beyond begins from day one on the bench.

The guideline is part of a broader program of work to prevent judicial bullying and address it when it occurs. That work includes professional development within the judiciary, bystander training, induction, and court craft sessions, which encourage self-reflection.

The Commission will also continue to conduct sessions with various groups to explain the Commission's role in receiving complaints and the processes which follow.

My aim is to ensure that we maintain the qualities and standards expected of all Victorian judicial officers.

A dominant theme that emerged from the consultation process is that the majority of judicial officers do not engage in judicial bullying. Nevertheless, it is a significant issue.

I am grateful for the support already provided by judicial officers to me and the other heads of jurisdiction as we attempt to address the issues of judicial bullying.

I want to thank all those who took part in the consultation process conducted by the Commission. The insights provided have shaped the guideline and reinforced the importance of addressing this issue.
