

## HRM AT WORK EXERCISE

### Pranks in the workplace no joke

**REFERENCE:** 'It's no laughing matter', Charles Purcell, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26-27 February 2005, 'My career', p.1.

### CHAPTERS RELEVANT TO THIS EXERCISE: 4, 18

#### Summary

Humour can have a positive impact on workplace culture and performance but it can also have decidedly dysfunctional effects on staff morale and performance. Pranks and practical jokes sometimes constitute harassment and assault; inappropriate humour can be dangerous; what appears hilarious to some workers may be offensive, humiliating and stressful to others. While industries such as butchering, construction and engineering are particularly prone to such problems, workplace bullying is now also widespread in office work. According to the ACTU, some 350 000 Australians a year are subjected to long-term bullying. Email has emerged as a major focal point of workplace pranks and harassment.

#### Questions

1. Why are workplace pranks of legitimate concern to managers?
2. What is bullying?
3. What are the relevant legal strictures?
4. What should HR managers do about bullying?