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Employees don't trust internal whistleblower reporting platforms – FIFO report

A WA parliamentary inquiry into sexual harassment in the FIFO mining industry has called on companies to use anonymous reporting platforms – such as Crime Stoppers WA's "Safe2Say" – to remove barriers that deter some workers from making complaints.

The recently released report – "[*Enough is Enough: Sexual harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry*](#)" – found "the fear of negative repercussions from reporting incidents of sexual harassment or assault is well known within the FIFO workforce and is a deterrent to victims reporting.

"It is therefore obvious that anonymity must be an option for victims wishing to make a complaint."

As such, the report made a direct recommendation (13) for:

WorkSafe WA use its industry influence to inform workplace investigation and training requirements. It should also utilise anonymised reports from other agencies such as Crime Stoppers for this purpose.

Crime Stoppers WA CEO Dr Vince Hughes said the Safe2Say platform was developed in response to requests from organisations wanting an anonymous reporting platform supported by Crime Stoppers WA's intellectual property.

"The Tor technology used by the Safe2Say platform allows the option for a two-way encrypted private conversation so that additional information can be requested, or updates can be provided without compromising the anonymity of the reporter," Dr Hughes said.

"Our anecdotal experience shows a person is more likely to report misconduct or sexual harassment if they trust the reporting platform and the anonymity it provides.

"We believe that Crime Stoppers' reputation and brand provides that trust and anonymity that other reporting platforms cannot offer."

Dr Hughes said many organisations did not fully understand the difference between anonymous reporting and confidential reporting.

"Simply put, confidential means I know who you are, but I won't tell anyone that doesn't need to know. Anonymous means I don't know who you are, and I will respect your rights to anonymity by not trying to find out," Dr Hughes said.

"For example, new employees usually receive an IT policy document from their employer when they start their job. This document usually cautions the employee that all internal transactions on their IT system can be monitored.

"The employee also receives a HR policy that encourages the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour. This policy usually provides an internal link/location on the employer's IT system where a confidential or anonymous report can be made.

"However, this clearly presents confusion for the employee who questions how can a report be submitted anonymously if their IT activity can be traced? Such confusion leads to mistrust and consequently a lack of reporting."



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The parliamentary committee agreed.

“One of the recurring themes of this inquiry was the disconnect between what companies perceived the case to be and what individuals told us. Perhaps the greatest disconnect involved the experiences of individuals with company reporting systems.

Individuals almost exclusively told a negative story of using a company reporting system. Some were generally wary of the systems. Some had no confidence that reporting would achieve anything. More concerning, some were so fearful of repercussions that they would not risk reporting at all.”

Dr Hughes said high-profile mining industry bodies such as the Chamber of Minerals and Energy (CME) and the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) had also supported the introduction of Crime Stoppers WA’s Safe2Say reporting platform as an anonymous third-party platform while Engineers Australia called for a “comparable system”.

Implementation of Safe2Say will also demonstrate enhanced environmental, social and governance (ESG) compliance in a company’s portfolio and allow them to comply with their obligations under the Treasury Laws Amendment (Enhancing Whistleblower Protections) Act 2019.

Any revenue earned from the Safe2Say anonymous reporting platform would be returned to Crime Stoppers WA community projects, addressing issues like drug dealing, illegal firearms and family violence.

For further information about Safe2Say, visit www.safe2say.com.au or email info@safe2say.com.au

About Crime Stoppers WA

Crime Stoppers WA Ltd is an independent, not-for-profit community organisation and registered charity, working in partnership with the WA Police Force to help any member of the public play a key role in solving crime via our online report form or the toll-free telephone hotline 1800 333 000.

Our services allow you to safely report criminal activity and suspicious behaviour anonymously, so you can have peace of mind while playing your part to keep the Western Australian community safer. You don’t have to leave your personal details, the call and caller ID isn’t recorded and your computer IP address is not trackable.

One of the best-known and trusted names in this State, Crime Stoppers has been actively contributing to a safer WA since December 1994.