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Investigator praises client for sharing findings

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A workplace consultant hired to investigate whether there was any misconduct by Doctor Blake Mysteries lead actor Craig McLachlan on that production has praised his employer's handling of the matter and provided advice for businesses seeking to improve their workplace culture.

The joint managing director of HR and conflict management consultancy [Pax People Resolutions](#), Fiona Bigelli, told *Workplace Express* today that [Doctor Blake](#) producers [December Media](#) had done the "right thing" in sharing the findings of her investigation.

While Bigelli would not comment on her probe, December Media said in a statement that after interviewing a "sufficiently large number" of people from the show's fifth season, her confidential report made "no findings of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct or workplace bullying by Craig McLachlan or any other person on Doctor Blake".

Interviews had, however, highlighted that Doctor Blake's workplace culture "consisted of, amongst other things, a workplace humour which has been described by many as sexual, lewd, bawdy, 'Benny-Hill-esque' and crude" behaviour that might be offensive despite the fact no formal complaints had been received.

December Media said that while it has "all appropriate policies and procedures in place with respect to workplace behaviour", it would implement recommended improvements to "be in line with world-best practice" and would share these with the rest of the industry.

This included a "code of conduct as well as a grievance and conflict resolution process" which would involve "establishing a best-practice reporting system whereby someone can report outside of the line management structure to help encourage employees to speak up if they have an issue".

The report and December Media's statement did not deal with separate allegations against McLachlan during his starring role in the *Rocky Horror Show in 2014 that are currently subject to police investigations*.

McLachlan denies those allegations and claims he has been defamed.

In the wake of the allegations, December Media commissioned the investigation before starting filming of the next series of Dr Blake.

Bigelli told Workplace Express that in certain situations sharing investigation results and responses to recommendations with employees and media is "appropriate as it signals how serious" an employer considers an issue and can help reassure that they intend to take appropriate action.

She added that there is now a "much higher awareness" about what constitutes acceptable conduct and a lower tolerance for disrespectful behaviour, and she rejects any suggestion that the characteristics of what constitutes an acceptable workplace culture differs according to industry.

Rather, just as requirements under state and federal legislation apply to all, expectations around "decent, safe, respectful behaviour is agnostic of industry" and are not avoided "just because you are a little more arty".

"Employees are wanting to be in environments that are respectful of each other", Bigelli says.

When companies call on her to conduct investigations and make findings, she says she is "not there to have an opinion" but purely to ascertain what can or cannot be established based on the balance of facts and probabilities.

But if asked to make recommendations, Bigelli says she then puts on a "different hat", looking at the business context, risk management and where the workplace culture component fits in, including its importance to employers.

Bigelli recommends that company leaders ask themselves whether the current culture is helpful to their business, conduct an assessment of its impacts and risks, and think about how to ensure employees can prosper in a safe, healthy, environment, free from discrimination and harassment.

"It needs to start with leadership and there needs to be a desire to change," Bigelli says.

She also recommends that leaders take a two-pronged approach to generating change, both formally through policies and processes and informally through their day-to-day modelling and encouragement of the behaviour they want to see, such as teamwork, cooperation and respect.

This could include talking about behaviour as a standing agenda item at meetings, recognition at awards and ceremonies and using performance management to build and capitalise on what is good about a company's workplace culture while "weeding out" behaviour that is not aligned.

"A consciousness and understanding of workplace culture is fundamental for workplace leadership."

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