

[REDACTED]

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I was offered three months work by a Senator, based upon some high level writing I had done for some state politicians. I had a good relationship with the Senator but his PA was very possessive of him and quite suspicious of anybody who came into his orbit. The bullying, accusations and put downs commenced on Day 2, but given the short duration of my contract I decided to stay silent. I do have a HR background however and started documenting incidents from the beginning. This culminated in a document of 2,500 words. At the end of my contract in [REDACTED] the Senator offered me another [REDACTED] work, which I accepted. From that point the bullying by this [REDACTED] got worse. In late January I'd finally had enough and reported the bullying to the Senator. This meeting did not go well and he became quite angry.

I then also made a formal report to [REDACTED] in Canberra.

I later learned that this PA had worked for the senator a couple of years earlier, but left after numerous complaints by staff about [REDACTED] behaviour. [REDACTED] had then assumed a position in a [REDACTED] but was 'let go' after [REDACTED] for 'disruptive' behaviour.

At that point the Senator had re-employed [REDACTED] as [REDACTED] was now 'a new person', which turned out to not have been true.

I learned that two people in my office had complained to the Senator, not long before I started, about [REDACTED] bullying volunteers during an election campaign but nothing was done about it.

Another young staffer, raised [REDACTED] bullying, with the Senator in an exit interview but, once again, no action was taken.

Because I took the matter out of the office, I believe this finally forced the Senator to act and an independent investigation occurred, report was compiled, other staff supported my claims and the [REDACTED] left the Senator's employment shortly after that.

I am angry that the bullying that I encountered has destroyed my relationship with the Senator. I loved the work I was doing. I had left his office before the independent inquiry/report had occurred. I did have one meeting with the Senator in a neutral location, with an external facilitator and a support person where I was offered the opportunity to say how the experience had affected me. I appreciated this opportunity.

I strongly believe that an independent body needs to be there where complaints can go. The Dept of Finance really can only make recommendations. All the recent publicity has been about a female allegedly being sexually assaulted in parliament house (and there is no way I am comparing my experience to hers) but it is a fact that men bully women, women bully men and there is a huge power imbalance between senior and junior staffers as well as politicians and staffers.

I hope that my submission helps result in positive change.

I am an older worker, was over the moon to be 'back in harness' again, not for the money, per se, but simply to be useful. I was working well with eager people who were half my age, contributing, learning, collaborating with all, but one, who saw me as a threat and came after me.

Rgds

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]