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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## PART C: Submission

### 1. How would you describe the workplace culture(s) of the Commonwealth parliamentary workplace(s) where you work/have worked? Please outline specific strengths and/or weaknesses in terms of workplace culture(s), based on your experiences, as appropriate.

As a very small workplace, it depended on the personalities in the room. If one toxic & dominant person was present, that would dictate the mood of the day. The weakness of the electorate office structure is that the MP essentially functions as a small business owner, regardless of whether that is part of their skillset or not. The [REDACTED] I worked for had many strengths - incredibly intelligent, a very hard worker, kind. But managing people and conflicts was not part of her skillset. And there was no one else to oversee HR issues, which I believe was the biggest structural weakness of working there. I was 23/24 years old while working at this office.

I had an older female employee bully me relentlessly over that time, and after I left I am aware that she bullied other young women. The view among the other staffers was that she was a pain and a liability, but that she had worked for the [REDACTED] for a long time, the [REDACTED] was waiting for her to retire and she just hadn't. Her bullying included monitoring my work and reporting directly to the [REDACTED] if she felt I had made even a small mistake (rather than approaching me first - she was also not my supervisor), telling me that the [REDACTED] thought I wasn't working hard enough (I raised this with the [REDACTED] and asked her to please give me feedback on my performance - she asserted that she had never complained about my performance to the other employee and went on to give her A Talk), made regular comments about my appearance and complained/gossiped about me to party members at an event I had organised. I raised these issues with the [REDACTED], and said that the long-term party member was willing to relay what the other staff member had said to him. The [REDACTED] said 'I won't be calling [party member]'. It was made very clear to me that I had to live with it and that a complaint or mediation would not go forward with the other staff member. The [REDACTED] said something along the lines of 'In my working life I have worked with much worse people than [other staffer]', which I took to mean that I should get over it and feel fortunate that the bullying wasn't worse. I felt that I was ultimately pushed out of the office because this long-term staffer did not want me there. By the end of my time there, I felt extremely gaslighted in my work and anxious. It took me years of working in a respectful workplace to realise that people appreciate my work and that I don't have to be on guard. It was a very personally damaging experience.

The same older female employee also made a lot of objectifying comments of younger men in the office and other party offices. One time she touched both hips of a young male employee as he tried to walk past her. It was all sort of laughed off but even at the time I felt it was off.

For a long part of my time working at this office, overwork was very common. People would be on leave and we would organise work and approvals around that, and then the person on leave would still be logging on and want to be part of the workflow. When I asked the [REDACTED] about it, she said 'the staffers get paid built-in overtime, so that's why this person is logging on'. This [REDACTED] was extremely outspoken on [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] but her attitude to work in her own office was completely antithetical to that. There was implicit pressure to get to the office early, eat at the desk, not take a break, and leave the office late. Towards the end of my time there, this culture had thankfully started to shift. I believe this was down to a change in personnel and not because of leadership of the [REDACTED] or guidelines from Parliament.

This office also had a bit of a flat structure, which in my opinion didn't work. If someone is not officially assigned seniority, then someone will unofficially fill that void. So it was never explicitly clear who was in charge of what, but certain staffers started to unofficially assume responsibility and we all had to figure it out. It wasn't great.

**2. Based on your experiences, what are the factors that already do, or could contribute to a safe and respectful environment in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces?**

- All staff are afforded a base level of respect and professionalism
- Work expectations and roles are made clear
- Issues are raised by the [REDACTED]/chief-of-staff with the relevant staff members, in a direct but respectful way
- Conflict among staffers is managed, with an option for mediation if needed.
- There should also be a clear and authoritative option to approach someone separate to, or above the [REDACTED] if the [REDACTED] is unwilling or incapable of resolving intra-office conflict.

**3. Based on your experiences, what are the factors that may contribute to workplace bullying, sexual harassment or sexual assault in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces?**

- Lack of accountability (Senator/MP not taking action)
- Lack of consequences for unacceptable behaviour
- Lack of explicit guidelines and examples of what constitutes workplace bullying and inappropriate behaviour
- The idea that inappropriate touching/behaviour is limited to men (while I believe men are overwhelmingly perpetrators of sexual harassment, that doesn't mean women don't also do it, albeit in less severe ways). Perhaps a HR course on consent and bodily autonomy in the workplace would make it clearer for all employees - perpetrators and victims - and allow victims to feel more comfortable to speak up about it.

**4. Are you familiar with any Commonwealth parliamentary workplace policies, processes and/or practices in relation to staff and worker safety and wellbeing, workplace bullying, sexual harassment or sexual assault? If so, please outline your understanding of how these policies, processes and/or practices operate.**

No. I spoke to the union at the time to see what could be done, and they said keeping a diary and then presenting this to them could get wheels turning on action. The other employee was also a union member. By this stage I only had a few months left on my contract and didn't think it would come to anything, so I didn't pursue this route.

**5. During your time working in a Commonwealth parliamentary workplace(s), have/did you receive any education or training in relation to worker safety and wellbeing, and/or how to prevent or respond to workplace bullying, sexual harassment or sexual assault? If yes, please outline your experience of the training and whether it was useful in increasing your knowledge and/or skills in relation to preventing and responding to workplace bullying, sexual harassment or sexual assault.**

No, none.

**6. Are you aware of how you and/or other people working in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces can report workplace bullying, sexual harassment or sexual assault (either formally or informally)? If yes, please specify what reporting options exist, and outline your experience with accessing and/or using those reporting options if applicable.**

I am not aware of how one reports workplace bullying. I have not worked in a Commonwealth parliamentary workplace since [REDACTED]

**7. Are you aware of any supports available in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces to people who experience workplace bullying, sexual harassment or sexual assault? If yes, please specify what supports exist, and outline your experience with accessing and/or using those supports if applicable.**

No

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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