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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.

I've worked for three Senators.

The workplace culture in each of these offices was highly dependent on the characteristics of the Senator in question. Although the Department of Finance provides notional support in terms of human resources, a member of parliament ultimately has hiring and firing power over their staff. I think they should be supported with much more training and guidance, and should be held more accountable for their recruitment and management decisions.

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?

As above, I think members of parliament (MPs) should be supported with more training and guidance in the management functions of their roles, and should be held accountable for their recruitment and management decisions.

In particular there should be firmer guidelines. For example, the fact it was permitted for MPs to have sexual relationships with their own staff until relatively recently is completely out of step with community standards.

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

The starkest experience I had was working as a staffer in Parliament House when [REDACTED]. Immediately and since then, I have observed the culture in Parliament House to be quite hostile to women. This includes everyday interactions like walking around the building, where one would feel conspicuous as a woman. In my view, having more women in leadership roles would help, and even having greater numbers of women in the building at all would assist somewhat.

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.

I was aware of generic human resources policies from the Department of Finance. I never saw anyone held accountable to these.

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.

Not from the Department of Finance or another Commonwealth agency.

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.

Yes. During my time (from [REDACTED]) I heard of people using these processes with no relief.

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.

The Employee Assistance Program is somewhat accessible.

8. Based on your experiences, do you have any suggestions or recommendations on how to improve the prevention of and responses to workplace bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces?

Recommendations:

1. Provide greater training and support to members of parliament in human resources functions.
2. Hold them accountable to a greater standard.

9. Is there anything else you would like to tell the Commission?

Feel free to contact me to discuss anything further.

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