

[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.

The Parliamentary administrative staff be they clerks, librarians upward to the Clerk of the Senate were always generally great people and helpful.

Members staff though had to depend on the decency of the member as there was no system in place that supported the rights of the employee to be treated respectfully or fairly.

I always thought, given our culture, that we weren't very good with the idea of 'servants' but thats how we were seen and treated by many MP's. This led to bullying, exploitation and abuse.

Its especially surprising that in the parliament of Australia the 'workers' work conditions were so onerous in terms of hours, remuneration and rights. How does that happen? My view is that the system has gotten away with it because of a work structure that reflects a lack of respect for the worker. Many, many times I have worked from 7am to 2am when the Senate was sitting, I have prepared hundreds of questions for Estimates but never was there any thanks or appreciation from the Senator. There were tirades of abuse and numerous acts of bullying. In the end I had to hire a [REDACTED] after 6 months I was begrudgingly offered a settlement. This experience demonstrated crucial truths. (1) There was no internal process to resolve such matters. (2) The process automatically became adversarial. (3) Consequentially [REDACTED] became not the arbitrator but the silent supporter of the Senator. (4) As a further example of the workers lack of rights, the failure of due process and the bias implicit in what should be a transparent and objective process I had to sign a confidentiality agreement for the matter to finally settled.

Who did that protect? Not me, no it protected the bully and the dishonest faulty process.

Soon after my own experience our [REDACTED] also filed a complaint of bullying against the Senator. I mention this solely because in the current environment the perpetrators of the ill treatment of parliamentary staff appear to be

seen as male and male only. Not true and its not just a gender or human failure that has created this horrible workplace its is a system failure.

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?

An independent process to review the working environment of all parliamentary staffers that includes remuneration, hours, overtime offsets and complaint resolution.

That an independent body be established to manage all of the above, including perhaps, the establishment of a staff Ombudsperson.

That all members also receive training programs that may address the role of staffers, the responsibilities of members and conflict resolution.

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

My experience only relates to bullying and that has such a wide interpretation at the moment given the current cultural and social environment. Where do reasonable expectations and demands for excellence finish and bullying start? I have a view that while not excluding bad behaviour personnel resilience is needed in what can be a tough environment, its too easy these days for people to embrace the role of victim. Bullies act in a non-professional manner driven by psychological issues. As their errant behaviour is often constant they can be identified and counselled. Perhaps some consideration should be given to programs that can seek to address this. Ultimately though there needs to be a mechanism that protects the rights of staff so intimidation or concerns about job security do not drive silence. Trade Union involvement and membership could be one way of building a layer of support and protection.

Definitions of what amounts to bullying and even sexual harassment are, I believe, very hard to quantify and there is a danger in the present cultural environment could lead to workplaces that have new forms of toxicity.

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.

Sorry at this distance from my personal involvement, I dont.

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 such training.

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.

At the time was aware of none. At no time did anyone from the relevant departments contact me with advice or offers of assistance.

It was me against [REDACTED] and their advisors in the [REDACTED]. Despite some pretense of independence it was obvious that they and my Senator were inside the walled city and I was outside and so at great cost I had to engage an outside Industrial Relations barrister. Despite this I won but the journey should never have been as difficult and unpleasant as it was.

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.

At the time I was aware of none and I dont believe any existed.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]