

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[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.

The workplace was full of very committed, brilliant and passionate people. The incredible momentum and access to history making moments is exciting and it was a privilege to be part of some of genuinely historic events. Despite my own positive experiences, it is not a workplace that is accessible to a diverse range of people. I worked for Ministers for [REDACTED] and left due to burn out. The working environment promotes unhealthy lifestyle choices with little sleep, lots of alcohol and take away food, unsociable hours and high levels of adrenalin. In the best of environments the hours and intensity of the work would cause problems, but when the lack of induction, training, and general professionalism in employment arrangements under the MoP(S) act are built into it, it is a recipe for a toxic workplace. There is no way I could work in the same roles now in [REDACTED]. While it's really positive to see MPs being able to bring their children into the Parliament, the same courtesy is not often offered to staff. Not being available or able to stay at work beyond the time childcare centres closed would make it almost impossible to undertake advisory roles - especially in sitting weeks.

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?

The workplace culture depended very much on who you worked for, for some including myself, it was a like an extended family and the friendships I developed are still with me over ten years later.

Things that could improve the culture would be training for MPs on their responsibilities and obligations as employers, including their WHS obligations around people's wellbeing. MPs and Senators focus only on their role as representatives of the community, but they must be made to understand and take responsibility as employers and managers as well. In other professions people need to manage both their core business as well as human resources issues, and being a Parliamentarian should be no different.

Transparency in employment arrangements and a commitment from all those who work in parliament to a code of acceptable conduct would provide a level of accountability people could be held to, and support those who wish to speak up about what they see as unacceptable.

I also believe there are procedural changes that should be introduced to reduce the sense of 'exceptionalism' of the parliamentary workplace. Sitting hours should finish at 6pm, and greater use should be made of the Federation Chamber and committees to get through the legislative agenda. This has been done in other parliaments internationally and in the ACT. Technological solutions that were made available during COVID should be continued for exceptional circumstances where parliamentarians need to meet caring obligations or otherwise cannot physically get to parliament.

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

Opaque employment arrangements, a lack of position descriptions or clear performance expectations, a lack of understanding of workplace roles and responsibilities at all levels, from staff to parliamentarians.

Long hours, inflexibility in sitting arrangements and obligations, party loyalty and a total lack of consequences and accountability for those who do the wrong thing.

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.

When I worked in parliament house I dealt with the department of finance a few times on HR issues relating to pay and redundancy arrangements. I never undertook any formal training in [REDACTED] I was employed under the MoP(S) act, and the concept of workplace safety for staff or even talking about reporting sexual assault were never mentioned once.

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.

See above - never.

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 would assume through the Department of Finance, although I now understand there's a hotline too.

In terms of what people would most likely do - they'd probably mention it to someone in the leader's office, and then it would get 'managed' rather than resolved or formally reported.

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 - although I understand there's a new hotline.

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?

Complete cultural change as well as a code of conduct and more professional HR arrangements for staff - from recruitment, induction, training, and complaint handling.

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

I loved my time at Parliament House. I was never personally bullied or harassed, but it was a highly sexualised workplace. I left primarily due to burnout and the inability to maintain a staffing role as I moved to the next stage of my life having children.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]