
[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.

Parliament is a strange beast and not like any other place I have worked. It has a fantastic administrative support network which allows it to function extremely efficiently. However it's structure within the different members offices is wildly different and dependent on the personality's of the different elected officials.

In my experience this has led to some offices being a nurturing, healthy and enjoyable place to work, while others can be hellish in a verity of ways. I experienced bullying and harassment within the office and almost daily abuse from external sources.

Coupled with the fact that many staffers are younger people who have the stamina required to keep up with the high intensity work, their inexperience can lead to the work place being a dangerous place for their mental wellbeing and in some cases their physical health is also put at risk.

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?

If an Employment Assistance Program (EAP) for staffers exist, then I was unaware of it at the time. Something along these lines coupled with resilience training could go a long way to assist staff and help prevent burnout and other psychological problems occurring.

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 isolation of each office can be problematic. As most staff members won't know what different environments exist in different offices, they may assume, as I did, that their experiences are the norm and not know how to reach out for assistance.

Staff of Members are subject to a significant numbers of external pressures, these can include extensive scrutiny from media outlets and daily abuse from members of the public, many of whom have legitimate concerns and many who do not due to one reason or another. These pressures can lead to a high degrees of stress and cause staff members to lash out at subordinates. This can take different forms, be it physical or psychological.

The fact that many staff members have political aspirations can mean that they are hesitant to speak out, as this could be seen as disloyalty and potentially torpedo their own career trajectory. This has been something I have heard discussed during my time at APH and has been further born out in recent years.

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 know that such polices would have existed, however I can not recall ever seeing one.

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 at all.

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.

The only method I would have thought to use would have been to speak to the Chief of Staff of my office, or the MP or Senator. Otherwise for more serious events, I would only know to contact the police.

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.

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?

Providing access to counseling and resilience training should be stepped up drastically and information about how to access these services should be made more obvious.

Additionally some form of anonymous complaints system should be put in place, however, the small nature of the offices involved make it painfully obvious who would have made complaints, thus rendering any anonymity defunct.

There has been some reported success with a "lockbox" style complaints system, which was first designed by computer programmers in the US and has been replicated by some other organizations here in Australia I believe. Effectively it stores complaints about an individual until a threshold of some sort is reached at which time those who have filed a complaint are contacted and informed that they are part of a group who have seen or experienced this behavior and asked if they would like to move forward with further action. This provides safety in numbers, documentation of any history of behaviors and means that action is more likely, as most people are more willing to stand up for someone else rather than them selves. This is only a rough outline on this system, if you would like more information, then please feel free to contact me and I would be happy to provide further details.

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

As a result of my early time as a staffer I have developed post traumatic stress disorder and have only been able to work in short bursts since and rarely in anything like the capacity I had prior to my time at APH. I have reoccurring nightmares about my time at APH and only returned in [REDACTED] as a personal favor for a friend.

I also have not investigated out any form of compensation or support as I have feared that my doing so would hurt the political chances of the Party I worked for. While I know this isn't a rational fear, the notion that it would somehow be disloyal still prevents me from doing so.

I would be happy to talk further to someone if you would like any further information or clarification. I would also be happy to answer any questions via email. I have found providing this feedback rather difficult and apologies if the speed with which I have typed this up has made anything unclear.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]