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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.

The workplace culture is fast paced, challenging, exciting and dynamic. No day is the same. There is a high performing culture which brings out the best in staff. There is obviously a lot of pressure to do things right, which can sometimes be challenging when operating under tight time frames.

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?

A safe and respectful environment depends very much on the office in which you work. I have been lucky to have always worked in safe and respectful workplaces and I believe this is because of the experience of my colleagues in those offices. My colleagues' experience of working in Parliament, both in government and in opposition, set the tone of the office and created a supportive and welcoming environment.

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

I think a key factor in bullying is the lack of induction and training provided to new staff. I was lucky when I began working in Parliament as my background was in the Australian Public Service. I knew about Cabinet procedures, the role of advisers and the hierarchy within government. Without that experience, I would have struggled, as there was no induction or formal training about how to do my job. If I was completely new to a government job, and had no knowledge or induction or training, then it is very easy to see how bullying and harassment can occur - often out of frustration from colleagues about the lack of capability or knowledge of untrained staff.

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 am familiar with the Statement of Standards for Ministerial Staff. This requires ministerial staff to act with integrity and honesty. Whilst harassment is not explicitly mentioned, I believe this is covered by integrity.

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. I received no training on any aspect of my job, lest of all worker safety and wellbeing or bullying and harassment.

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 have never experienced any form of workplace bullying, sexual harassment or sexual assault during my time working in a Commonwealth parliamentary workplace. However, I assume that if I did, I would discuss it with my Chief of Staff or the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services branch of the Department of Finance. I am unaware what would happen subsequent to a complaint being made.

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.

Yes - 1800 APH SPT. I am also aware of the Employee Assistance Program line.

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?

I think that formal, mandatory inductions for Ministerial staff on their roles would be very useful. This would equip new employees with the skills and knowledge for them to do their job, which could reduce the risk of bullying. There should be a similar induction for shadow Ministerial staff.

I think there should be a clear path to report workplace bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault. This should be confidential, supportive and provide a forum for investigation. If an adverse finding is made, there should be sanctions for offenders, including Parliamentarians. Sanctions could include attending training or loss of employment.

I think Chiefs of Staff would benefit from formal training on managing staff. Chiefs of Staff are often policy or political experts, but this does not necessarily make them good people managers. Chiefs of Staff should be aware of avenues available to them if workplace bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault takes place in their office. The Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister and the Chief of Staff to the Leader of the Opposition should be aware of their responsibilities and duty of care to ministerial and shadow ministerial staff.

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

I really enjoyed my time working at Parliament House and I never experienced any workplace bullying, sexual harassment or sexual assault. It truly was an honour to work in a Minister's office and remains a career highlight for me.

There are obviously problems that need to be addressed but I think it is important that this review does not demonise Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces. It should be noted that the vast majority of people working in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces are not bullies or people who carry out assault. Our Parliament relies on good staff and the reputation of parliamentary staff should be enhanced by this review, and not diminished.

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