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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.

Positives - the pay is adequate for a 40 hour week.

Negative - literally no electorate officer I met works their set hours. While I went from being paid [REDACTED] I hardly ever worked a 40 hour week and particularly during parliamentary weeks I was effectively having my pay cut.

Although the notice period was flexible - the lack of unfair dismissal protections loomed. Electorate office work in general is isolated - you are with the same group of 3 or 4 people.

My employer [REDACTED] is notorious for being verbally abusive to her staff. I was bullied so bad that I lost focus at work, lost productivity and had to seek counselling. At my worst moments I had suicidal thoughts.

I was verbally, lied about and badmouthed by my employer both during and after my employment. I know that my employer has done this to others in the past and in more extreme ways than in my own case.

Electorate Officers often find it very difficult to gain employment after leaving an electorate office. Nasty rumours and badmouthing affect peoples chances of employment.

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?

Safe and respectful workplaces (or some kind of semblance of them) are only there for two reasons.

1. MOPS staff were always available to take my calls about concerns I had at work. They acted on any safety concerns I may have had.
 2. The media - they are ready to report on any terrible electorate office.
- These are the two thin protections which stop parliamentary workplaces getting too bad.

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

1. The Australian party and political system - MPs and particularly those who win marginal seats are treated like gold dust and the abusive behaviour of some of these MPs are completely ignored.
2. Reduced protection for parliamentary staff compared to other workers.
3. While I only travelled to Canberra [REDACTED] my impression was that a lot of particularly young male staff treated trips to Canberra as like a summer camp rather than serious work.

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.

I largely had to find these out for myself.

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 reporting mechanisms that exist currently are opaque and many are in fear of using them.

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.

Nope.

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?

A statutory Parliamentary and Ministerial Ombudsman - an independent ombudsman to complain to about the behaviour of MPs, staff and ministers. Their remit should be to investigate instances of bullying and harassment.

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

I wish Parliament and the public in general cared as much about the costs associated with workplace bullying as they do about Parliamentary entitlements.

An MP who spends \$25,000 of taxpayer money on a printing bill will gain outrage from within parliament and the public.

An MP whose actions result in \$25,000 [or more] of taxpayer money being used as a result of bullying and harassment (annual leave paid out, sick leave, EAP counselling, loss of

productivity, cost of hiring new staff, admin costs of the electorate office and MOPS) - barely raises a peep.



