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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.

I worked in a toxic environment in which after two years I was a casual on month-to-month contracts. I worked consistent hours and by definition, I was not a casual.

I was treated poorly by the MP I worked for, received no training, and had limited career progression in two years of good, solid work. I was treated like dirt on their shoe and gaslighted regularly.

When a family member died and I missed work - I was not given bereavement leave, nor supported in any way. I was forced to make up the hours I missed.

The workplace culture is that of overworked, underpaid and under-appreciated. You are not allowed to be a human in this role, and if you do well, you are likely to not be thanked or commended for it.

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?

More protections for those on month-to-month contracts, avenues to be able to report bad behaviour that don't feel like they could end your career.

Compulsory training for new workers and ongoing support.

Social events for non-Canberra staff so we can interact with other workers and not feel so trapped and alone in our EOs.

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

Members of parliament having too much authority and their power going to their head. In the same way, young men in particular becoming extremely egotistical and controlling after being given power.

MPs and staffers becoming power hungry and believing that they are not only untouchable but also huge levels of entitlement.

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 at least reasonably familiar with these policies but you are taught early on that everything you do can become a news story. On my first day on the job, a superior said "remember that anything you do can end up on the front page of [REDACTED]. If it wouldn't be good on the front page, don't do it."

The option to go to the department or seek assistance with an issue is almost a non-option when it's bound to be leaked to the media and either permanently affect your career, or the party in which you work for/support. So it's just not really a viable option.

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.

Honestly? No, not at all.

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?

There needs to be actual checks and balances in place for MPs who take advantage and exploit young people, particularly young women. While it's a privilege to be able to work in an electorate office, MPs are also privileged to have workers. There needs to be a better system in place to support workers, and there needs to be a cultural change.

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