

Submission 94

My experience of sexual harassment involved inappropriate and uninvited physical contact by the Senior [REDACTED] Officer/CEO (a man in his 60's) on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2015. Further to a background of bullying by the Senior [REDACTED] Officer (i.e. unsubstantiated, anonymous claims lacking examples or context regarding my work and when challenged by me were revealed to have no substance) the Senior [REDACTED] Officer took to engaging in "friendly banter". He called me a "good girl" and on one occasion grabbed me and hugged me tightly to his big, bulky body.

I couldn't breathe. I felt defenceless. I froze and my body went rigid. I felt somehow violated, extremely uncomfortable, voiceless and demeaned. Despite being a professional woman in my fifties, I felt as if I was just "a girl to be manhandled" by this big, brash [REDACTED] misogynist. This man publicly derided women (i.e. the newly appointed female head of the [REDACTED]) and not one of my colleagues (male or female) challenged him as he had the power to re-appoint (or not) all [REDACTED] [REDACTED] officer's.

I felt powerless to report the incident as this man was the head of the [REDACTED] and I believed he was "untouchable". Who would believe me? I recorded my reaction to the incident by sending myself an email and by speaking to a trusted colleague and my husband. I was fearful of backlash and my professional reputation if the incident were to become public.

This incident in addition to the bullying and harassment I experienced over a period of 3-4 years at the [REDACTED] gave rise to the development of a mental health condition. Due to the onset of anxiety and depression I have not worked since [REDACTED] 2016. I have an active worker's compensation and income protection claim. My treating Psychiatrist, Psychologist and GP consider that I am permanently unfit to return to my previous role [REDACTED]. How many women have their lives and careers destroyed by men who believe they are above the law?