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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 Federal **Senator's office for the years from the end of to** to the end of **Senator's office for the end of to** is so, generally, I found the culture amongst staffers to be quite 'cliquey'. This would roughly correspond to the **Senator's office for the end of the end of to** but also some staffers, who were clearly more focused on their own political careers, would be quite exclusive. I make this statement purely to set context. There was generally also a culture of 'partying hard', particularly in sitting weeks. I was travelling to Canberra from my home state, a situation common to many other staffers.

On one occasion, I think possibly in about the I had become friendly with some staffers from another Senator's office (who was a second of a sour bosses had common areas of policy interest. I had spent quite a bit of time with them on a professional basis, but one night had gone to a bar and had had a few drinks with staffer. I recall distinctly at telling me that

At one point late at night we ended up kissing and I think I recall wanting to come home with me. Indeed at one poin said, 'I'd like to fxxx your brains out.' I must have been about at the time.

Nothing further happened that evening as I called a taxi and went home to where I was staying. The next day came to visit me in the office at Parliament House, to make sure I wasn't going to say anything. We chatted about the events of the previous evening (I can't recall the particulars of the conversation) and thereafter we continued to work indirectly with each other until I left my Senator's office at the end of

The advance was most definitely unwelcome and I obviously didn't report it at the time. Looking back now all these years later, in light of all the stories that have come to light, all <u>I can think</u> of is, 'there for the grace of God go I'.

the power imbalance between me, a young electorate officer, and electorate officer, and was vast. In the context of a male-dominated, fast drinking culture, where 'what happens in Canberra, stays in

Canberra' and the competitive environment where staffers worked (and tried to further their own political careers), I obviously didn't even think about reporting this to anyone, and I would not have known to whom to report it had I even thought it was sexual assault. I probably went along with it because I thought it was 'the right thing to do' to fit in. I also personally knew of affairs that went on with politicians that 'everyone knew about'. So I just went along with it as part of the 'normal' for the culture .Bear in mind that this is also approximately grass ago where the public dialogue around 'consent' and 'date rape' and other associated concepts was non-existent. I had also grown up in a world and attended a University residential College, with the similar events and themes to that described by Chanel Contos, so the one night 'hook ups' were not an uncommon event.

I tell this story to demonstrate the weaknesses in the workplace culture at the time: no education, no standards, no policies, no guidance, no body to enable positive culture or change, and a lack of awareness of sexual assault issues.

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?

An impartial body to oversee cultural change.

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

As described above - the culture I experienced was that of secrecy, of partying, of 'what happens on tour, stays on tour' and the stratified culture of staffers contributed to the sexual harassment. It was a culture of conformity where you tried to fit in.

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. Not at all.

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 assault.

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.

N/A - I no longer work there.

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? Even years later after I worked at Parliament House, it seems that cultural change is well overdue.

