

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

## **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.**

At times the culture is poor and unprofessional, depending on the competency of the leaders within the office.

**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?**

Some MPs are qualified to lead small teams, and in my experience the culture in those offices is more professional and fair.

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

There are no "checks and balances" in an MP's office. They are left to lead a small group autonomously and direct staff in their work, but many lack the skills or experience to do this. Complaints to the [REDACTED] are either referred to the MP or not acknowledged at all.

**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.**

Every couple of years [REDACTED] would send all staff an email with a link to the workplace bullying and harassment policy.

**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.

**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.**

In my experience, the reporting process is non-existent [REDACTED]

**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?**

See attachment.

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

[Redacted]

**Upload a file**

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I worked in electorate offices for around [redacted] years - [redacted].

In my experience these are some of the most exploitative and harmful workplaces in Australia. Bullying, intimidation and harassment is not just tolerated, it is rewarded.

And while, undoubtedly, the culture of Parliament allows sexual harassment and discrimination to occur, there is a broader problem - people simply treat each other badly. [redacted]

It started when I was offered a job in an electorate office [redacted]. I was studying at uni and had always been interested in politics and a political party, but I was incredibly excited to have the opportunity to work for a [redacted]. I genuinely bought in to the idea we were contributing to politics.

The office manager was an influential figure, both within the office and the [redacted]. Given the 'boss' was away from the electorate so frequently, almost everything was done in [redacted] direction. At the time I didn't know how a professional office should function; I now think I was [redacted] to believe the things that went on there were normal.

[redacted] I had [redacted] the electorate each month.

The office manager was an intimidating figure; aggressive, dominant. Some days [redacted] would heap praise on me and I would be [redacted] closest confidant; usually, though, this came at the expense of other staff, who [redacted] would complain to me about. When [redacted] wasn't happy [redacted] was blunt, ruthless. I often [redacted] home in tears after one of [redacted] dressing downs. I think [redacted] all kept our heads down and hoped each day we weren't the one [redacted] decided to pick on.

I never felt like I had the nerve to stand up to [redacted] even when [redacted] asked me to do things I felt uncomfortable with, [redacted]. Many times I was told I should "just be [redacted]"

[redacted]

Eventually I moved on from that office. [redacted]

Years later, I discovered [redacted] actively worked to stop me getting jobs in other electorate offices. There is no requirement for merit based recruitment in these jobs and falling foul of an influential party figure can be a bad career move.

I did, however, go on to work for two other MPs throughout the course of my career. The first was a largely positive experience working [redacted] in a professional environment. I learned a range of new skills and honed others, [redacted] in a senior position in the office [redacted]

I then chose to work for a [redacted] MP. [redacted]. I was excited to [redacted]

Early on, I sensed [redacted] was overwhelmed by the job. [redacted] would have staff prepare pages of background notes every meeting, even a simple meet and greet. [redacted] almost always turned up late to meetings, but would leave with a long list of action items - tasks that should have been handled by other levels of government or specialised services.

[redacted] staff  
[redacted] asking [redacted] and [redacted] directives and still meet their regular workload. I also learned that if we couldn't make [redacted] 'ideas' a reality, no matter how far fetched they were, [redacted] would become furious.

[redacted] MPs generally have four core staff members. At least [redacted] people have worked for this [redacted] years. I lasted [redacted] one of the longest stints.

I was hired as the [redacted] but when the [redacted] left after only [redacted] months I was asked to replace them [redacted] fully, essentially performing [redacted] full-time roles. [redacted] would receive phone calls, emails and text messages at all hours and it was not unusual to start the day with dozens of emails, each one requiring action and some having been sent at 1am, 2am etc.

Letters would take weeks to be finalised. [redacted] s. I

don't think any of us felt clear on the goals or direction of the office.

When I raised this, [redacted] dismissed me. In fact, [redacted] said we weren't busy and should be able to do more. By this time I had worked in electorate offices for many years and knew how they should function. My colleagues and I were working hard and producing quality outcomes. None of this was good enough [redacted]

[redacted] would react angrily to things I felt were out of our control. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] was obsessed with tiny details, never the bigger picture. There was always something [redacted] wasn't happy with, so [redacted] outbursts were usually over something minor. I was criticised on [redacted] daily basis, but struggled to understand how I could do better or why the minutiae mattered. I watched on as overworked staff were belittled, and constantly told they were incompetent. Some took mental health leave, most just became fed up and left.

Due to the high staff turnover we were chronically understaffed. There were always vacant positions to fill but most of the time [redacted] either couldn't make a decision or waited for direction from the party office. [redacted] was told to [redacted] a [redacted] on the payroll, even when more qualified or experienced candidates had applied. [redacted] applicants were overlooked because [redacted]

I worked in the dual role for as long as I could, but with no indication a permanent arrangement would be made or that my workload would be reduced, I made the decision to step back. By this stage my wellbeing had suffered immensely and my family and friends were worried. I was working all hours of the day and night, and on weekends. I was exhausted.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Eventually I was made redundant. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I spent months [REDACTED] to recover from exhaustion and low self esteem. When I felt strong enough to make [REDACTED] I contacted [REDACTED] to raise my concerns about the way staff are treated in that office. I ne

I've started my career again at the bottom rung of the public service and have taken a huge pay cut in doing so - but my only regret is that I didn't do it sooner. I now see what a functioning HR department and a genuine concern for employee wellbeing can do. I have also learned the value of leadership - MPs are elected by the public but that doesn't mean they have the skills or ability to lead a team. Electorate offices are highly political environments; and while [REDACTED] there are undoubtedly many of them treating their

It is precarious employment. Our jobs are tied to our boss' success - if they lose their job, through a reshuffle or an election, so do we. If the MP decides we are no longer valuable to them, a simple "restructure" removes us and makes our jobs redundant. Job certainty is scarce in many industries, but in this one it rests with one individual, who literally writes the laws they are to abide by.

Parliament is a place where a select few hold enormous power - not just over public policy but over their own, personal workforce. It is an aggressive and combative environment, and like many institutions of power it attracts those who seek to exploit it. Not all politicians are bad bosses and not all staffers are ruthless and ambitious, but if they are, they can flourish. These are not the modern Australian workplaces we expect them to be.

In my opinion [REDACTED] should do more to support MOPS Act employees' health and wellbeing. [REDACTED] case that issues in the workplace are managed by the MP themselves - many of whom lack the leadership skills or competency to ensure their staff are treated fairly and have manageable workloads, where confronting them about their poor behaviour will make matters worse, or who are simply so invested in their own career path they encourage political interference, and a culture of aggression and rule-breaking within their offices.

I believe [REDACTED] should have a role in recruiting staff and managing their wellbeing [REDACTED] ar way to [REDACTED] Nobody is keeping an eye on [REDACTED] where culture is breeding. There is no need for new bodies or more reviews, the framework already exists. Remove the MPs as the recruitment and Human Resource coordinators in their offices and I hope the workplace culture will improve overall.