

HUMAN RIGHT COMMISSION _ SEXUAL HARASSMENT INQUIRY

INTRODUCTION: My name is [REDACTED] I live and work on a farm [REDACTED] [REDACTED], in partnership with my husband and extended family. I work in a very heavily Male Dominant Industry and I have been looking into Workplace Harassment quite intensely ever since an incident that occurred with one of my farm consultants and the company she worked for [REDACTED].

ISSUES CONTRIBUTING TO RURAL SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

1. Business Structure – Large percentage of Business are Small Family Business/Family Farming Enterprises
 - a) Can register business, set up ABN and employ the next day, no training required. Most employers will research award rates, penalties, conditions and comply with Superannuation and think they are all good, don't look into safety, culture and other legislations.
 - b) Small business don't HR department (consultants are cost prohibitive) therefore most small business do NOT have policy and procedure for things such as workplace harassment. If the business doesn't have policy or procedure how do you complain?
 - c) If the business owner (HR Dept) is the offender, current regulations require you to potentially complain to them. If the other business partners are related to the offender, how do you complain?
 - d) Would it be fair to assume then that a large amount of complaints are swept under the carpet and/or employees moved on for complaining?
2. Isolation/Telecommunications – Agriculture in Australia is carried out in rural, regional and remote parts of our country, access issues to telecommunication isolate victims.
 - a) Inhibits ability to seek advice
 - b) Lack of support
3. Union Issues - [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the anti-union attitudes of Farming this has led to
 - a) Prohibited employees to accessing an alternate avenue in which to make a complaint
 - b) Prohibited employees accessing avenues of support from union representatives.
4. Culture - I am sure you don't need me to tell you that there is a very stong "Fit in or F#@* off" attitude in Rural, Remote Australia.

CONCLUSIONS - Over time these combined factors have led to a loss of voice and a virtual inability to complain about workplace harassment. This has endorsed unacceptable behaviour to become the cultural/social norm.

RECOMMENDATIONS -

- 1) Massive education campaign outlining Employer Obligations/Employees Rights to Workplace Harassment Policy for all Small business in Australia.
- 2) Use Print media (the land, countryman) & radio to reach and educate farmers
- 3) Compulsory Unit of Study to be added to all levels of education in regards to Workplace Rights/Obligations & Legislation
- 4) Online Course available to those who are already in business in regards to Employer Obligations.

- 5) Use Chamber of Commerce networks to provide workshops to Small Business Owners
- 6) Develop alternate complaints process that works for both Employer & Employee, that eliminated the needs for a complainant to have to report to the offender or a family member of the offender.
- 7) Consider an alternative Independent Body to act as a Union style representative to employees in Rural, Regional, Remote Australia to give support, advice and mediation. Could be outsourced to existing bodies that would be interested in this space [REDACTED]
- 8) Use ABARE to collect more accurate statistics (when doing their annual on-farm data collections) about this issue and to measure effectiveness and penetration of the education campaign.

I personally have already started working on points 1- 5 [REDACTED] to start educating Rural and remote [REDACTED] business owners about their workplace obligations.

Thankyou for reading my submission