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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.

It was ok. The team that I worked for day to day in the [REDACTED] office was great, however, the [REDACTED] office was not the same environment at all. The member herself did not instill a great workplace culture.

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?

Very little from my experience contributed to a safe workplace in Parliament. You really just wanted to find people you trust that you work with who could look out for each other.

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

The power imbalance is for certain the greatest factor. The member you work for has sole control over your employment. I saw utterly terrible conduct from the member at times particularly in the way that she spoke to people and ran the office. The fact that the member has the sole discretion to terminate you effectively on the spot is completely inappropriate. I both witnessed members of the office that I worked in be belittled, yelled at, sworn at as well as myself. Some of the older staff who had been around other offices just accepted this as the way business is done and so at the time you dont question it until you leave and realise how inappropriate this behavior really is.

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.

No. I was not aware of any of these during my time in the role. I also feel that to ask about any of this would have put you on the members wrong side. For example I can remember a time that I called MOPS about overtime and was told for doing so later on.

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. Never and I didnt know it was available if it is.

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.

No, I didn't know you could and I wouldn't have known where to look.

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, Im not aware of any.

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?

Mandatory training for all staff and members would be a good starting point. That would help make sure everyone knows what is inappropriate and hopefully feel comfortable in pointing it out if it happens. As well as knowing where to go if it happens and who to report to.

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

I hope that this report leads to the necessary change, as I look back on my time working there now and I am ashamed I didnt call out any of the bad behavior at the time. At the time I worked there I was only [REDACTED] and was lucky that I worked with some great people who really looked out for me and protected and effectively shielded me from a lot of what went on. I was young and gay and I was told to avoid certain members and to never be alone with certain people as 'I was there type' and told what would most likely happen if I did find myself in that situation. Which was at the time and still is very frightening to think was openly discussed as an open secret but never dealt with.

I think that the culture in parliament and electorate offices really needs to change. Having worked away from it for the last couple of years now I can see how backward it really was and how far it falls short of what is expected and allowed in the private sector.

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