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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 was very excited and had worked hard to gain a competitive position (as there are only [REDACTED] positions in Parliament House) so I came into the role very enthusiastic. I replaced a very well liked member of the office who was close to [REDACTED] as they had traveled extensively. I came in to the team during COVID so there was no travel and the culture in the office became clear quite quickly. The [REDACTED] was arrogant, dismissive and rude to junior members of the team, particularly women. It was clear that men were respected more than women in the office and that I was at the bottom of the pile. There were days when my presence was completely ignored (even when bringing in coffee for [REDACTED] whilst he was speaking to male colleagues). I felt as though the men that I interacted with in Parliament House were power hungry and arrogant, they looked at women as sexual objects that weren't equal.

The office I was in was not very social, I did not spend time outside of work with my colleagues and was never sexually harassed or assaulted during my time there. However, I am not quite sure how to articulate how I was treated. I was belittled and ignored or spoken down to every day however I never felt that one member of the staff was bullying me. I was so unhappy in my position that after [REDACTED], I went back to [REDACTED] and requested I be pulled out of APH ASAP. I was very emotional and unhappy. [REDACTED] decided to wait until the reshuffle [REDACTED] as I would have to come back then anyway.

The day of the reshuffle was announced, [REDACTED] sat down with all of the male advisors and offered mentoring, letters of recommendations and support in them finding new roles. As an after thought, when [REDACTED] was in the tea room and I walked past, he shouted at me asking what I would do now. I stopped and spoke to him, clearly upset, stating that I would go back to [REDACTED] and get what ever job they gave me. He showed no compassion and dismissed me without saying a word.

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?

Personally, I chose not to socialise with other members in that office outside of work hours. I think the social scenarios have caused issues in other offices but I did not witness it where I worked. I think higher numbers of women in the building will change the culture. I believe that the entire political network across Australia would need a massive shake

up in order to achieve a respectful work environment. I have witnessed even at the branch levels interstate the toxic, male dominated culture that is tainted with aggressive tones, which is the exact vibe that these men then bring with them to APH. More women around and a hotline like [REDACTED] would assist.

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

Bullying occurs when a culture allows it to, the culture in individual offices is completely different. [REDACTED] had the most welcoming, friendly and happy culture I experienced in APH, I would visit that office daily to keep my own morale up. I think the MPs and Senators are directly responsible for the culture that exists in their offices. Sexual harassment or assault should never have the opportunity to occur in a workplace. I think the elected officials should take responsibility for their staff and ensure that no members of their teams are ever in situations where other team members can be opportunistic and attack a colleague.

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.

I have no idea what they are. I was still an [REDACTED] and would have reported it through that chain if something had occurred. I did not trust [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] in my office enough to have let them handle a sexual assault or harassment claim.

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. Nothing.

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.

Nope. Whips' office?

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 - peer support?

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?

There should be a central reporting system that does not allow this sort of poor behaviour to be covered up by party officials in order to retain 'key personnel'. There must be an unbiased and accessible system that is available to everyone.

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

I have a friend who thought they were in a genuine relationship with [REDACTED] only to find out he already has someone at home and children, that were actively hidden/lies about. When she found out and confronted him, he stopped replying to her and now actively avoids her. This is the type of behaviour that is considered acceptable in APH. The elected members need to have actual repercussions for their poor behaviour. [REDACTED] has standards and discipline for this sort of behaviour but MPs act as though they are Gods among men and can do what ever they wish. This, in turn, teaches their advisors and staff that they can behave that way too. This is what has created such a toxic, selfish and misogynistic environment in APH.

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