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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 have worked for an MP for [REDACTED] years, both in the EO and in Parliament during sitting weeks, and I have overwhelmingly found the workplace culture of Parliament House, and the electorate office, to be positive and supportive. Amongst staff there is a camaraderie which comes from shared experience of what is a quite unusual working environment. There's high pressure, long hours, important considerations, and also great satisfaction from achievements and representations which you assist with in supporting your employing Member or Senator. I and other staff I have spoken to over the years regard it as a great honour to work for an MP and in that magnificent building which is Parliament House.

However, I acknowledge that not all staff have positive experiences, and I have had several confide in me over the years about difficult situations. These would generally fall into the categories of:

- workplace bullying,
- unreasonable demands on their time,
- what might be called 'whispering campaigns' where someone is being undermined through gossip for the benefit of the whisperer or others.

I think much of what I outline is present in any workplace. Perhaps the degrees are greater though because government, politics, is a high stakes environment.

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?

I have always felt safe and respected.

I have always been able to go to my direct employer (MP) with any concerns.

There are provisions in place for staff regarding safe travel after hours (which is essential and must be maintained)

There are numerous security staff and parliamentary attendants who are respectful, helpful and professional at all times. They deserve to be commended for the work they do.

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

I guess there is really no oversight of how MPs and Senators run their offices, and while the vast majority will manage that well and fairly, there are some definite examples of very unacceptable treatment of staff.

Some have unrealistic expectations, some are outright bullies, and some are constantly requiring their staff to work above and beyond what is acceptable.

I would note that a couple of the worst examples I am aware of perpetrated by female MPs and Senators.

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 some familiarity with the policies and have read up on the processes at times over the years when needed.

However I do believe there is a need to educate staff that a lot of information is available.

We can be bombarded by communication though so I don't believe more emails is the answer.

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.

I have done a number of training courses over the years and have always been impressed with how much is available (very different to the private sector).

I have recently done the workplace bullying and sexual harassment training that was being promoted.

It was useful and increased my knowledge - particularly in terms of being an [REDACTED] and getting clearer understanding of what constitutes harassment.

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.

I have not tried to find out myself. However am aware that the information is readily available and there is also now a phone number that is being extensively promoted.

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.

I have not accessed myself. And though I know there are supports available, I have had a number of staff express great disappointment in these 'supports'.

Ultimately it appears that everything is really stacked in the favour of the employing MP or Senator.

There are also big implications for the careers of staff if they do decide to report poor behaviour

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?

I think a more detailed induction would be very useful. I can't remember the details of my own induction [REDACTED] years ago, but I think it consisted of a tick and flick online form.

I do believe there needs to be a reporting process which is independent of MOPS, though I also think that will be difficult to do.

I believe wisdom, common sense and maturity play a big part in ensuring staff do not place themselves in situations that are unsafe. I don't know how you teach that, but some awareness could be included in a more detailed induction.

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

The greatest pressure and stress I have felt during my time of working for an MP has been as a direct result of harassment by media.

Though they are not all the same, there are a number who are aggressive, rude, disrespectful and entitled. Their employers should be required to provide them with some training in decency and respect.

I am quite used to very negative experiences with some of the [REDACTED].

However I was surprised at how depressed and ashamed I began to feel about the work environment and career I have loved, through the media coverage of the Parliament House workplace in the early months of this year. MOPS staff were very unfairly portrayed as victims or perpetrators, drunks, party animals, overpaid, under performers, and more.

The nation shuddered, and believed bad behaviour is the norm.

It was untrue and unfair, and yet there is no recourse for staff to respond to the media profiling.

The vast majority of staff are loyal, hard-working and sensible. But of course that revelation does not make for good click-bait.

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