

29/06/2021

To Whom it May Concern,

On Friday the 18th of June 2021, a Parliamentary Inquiry into the Operation and Management of the Department of Parliamentary Services was conducted, and a Proof Transcript was later made available.

As a part of this inquiry, representatives from the Australian Metal Worker's Union (AMWU) and the Plumbing Trades Employee's Union made statements in regards to issues surrounding management, culture and safety issues within the Maintenance Services Division at DPS.

Upon reading the available transcript, there are a number of staff within the Mechanical Services workshop who wish to provide rebuttal on the issues raised by these representatives with the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee.

We wish to preface this document with the following statements:

- At no point, has management approached us or asked to provide rebuttal, we have freely provided this information and at no point have we been encouraged or incentivized to create this document
- This rebuttal is representative of views from a large proportion, but not all members of the Mechanical Services workshop. We have not included our names on this document, however we are happy to provide these should it be required.
- Our reason for rebuttal is due to the following two reasons:
 1. We participated in a closed door meeting with Union representatives which was advertised as a private meeting which would not go beyond employees of DPS, the management of DPS and the Union- we were not made aware that this was going to be put forward in a Parliamentary Inquiry
 2. Certain statements made by the Union representatives are all-inclusive, that is to say we feel they have provided their member's points of views as points of view of the entire workforce, which is not the case.

The following are direct excerpts to which we would like to provide rebuttal from the Proof Transcript of the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee Inquiry into the Operation and Management of the Department of Parliamentary Services, which was conducted on Friday the 18th of June.

We believe the following statements do not represent the entire workforce with the Mechanical Services workshop but have been stated in a way that makes them seem that they are unanimously agreed to:

Statement 1:

THE CHAIR: *Thank you, Mr Bubb. Mr Windsor and Mr Johnston, did you want to provide open statements as well?*

Mr Windsor: Yes, I have got a couple of things to say. I am pretty much going to reiterate what Gavin was saying there and—but we initially got involved with members of management, it started with rostering. There was a few procedures that were not done correctly, we believe and after speaking to management, they sort of recognised that. So that was our initial call into talking with our members down there. But from there, one of our following members, he has not gone on stress leave as such, but he got to the point where he just had enough with management, and trying to speak to management, and not be able to get the points across. They believe things are not getting done properly, as far as Australian standards and the work in the house as well. He said, “I have had enough. I am getting out of here before I go crazy”. And he has taken 11 months of—I believe annual leave, long service leave. So just to have time away. He had had enough of being there. But there is a few issues, like Gavin was saying that we are happy to go through, I guess. But after our last meeting with management, I think management were in a bit of denial about the toxicity and that in the workforce. But we had our meeting and management had said previously to us that they had had a meeting the day before. And the members did not bring anything forward. So they were pretty happy. But when had the meeting with management and ourselves and all of the staff there, they obviously felt a bit more confident to be able to bring issues up to the table. And I guess, even at this senate inquiry there is a fear of retribution that if they do speak up, you know, that there will be repercussions. So hence why there is no one here. So that is the feeling we get from the floor, that they are too scared to speak up and the fear of losing their job or something like that. So we would like it on record, if possible, that anyone that is mentioned, or seems to be mentioned, in this has got some sort of protection in the future going forward. We do not want our members attacked, I guess, by management in any way, shape, or form. If there is any adverse action towards them, we would obviously follow that up with the Fair Work Commission. Thank you.

- This statement insinuates that the entire workshop (‘...the feeling we get from the floor, that they are too scared to speak up and the fear of losing their job...’) is or has been threatened with dismissal or other repercussions for bringing up points of concern with management.

During no point in our employment have we felt that we have not been able to bring forward points of concern or that our concerns would lead to our dismissal. Management has consistently provided a “open door” environment in which there has been no pressure or threat.

We were also not made aware that this meeting was going to be brought forward to the Committee, and as such were not given the opportunity to be present (‘So hence why there is no one here.’). Should the information have been provided, there are a number of us who would happily provide an alternate perspective on the matters that were brought forward.

Statement 2

Senator KITCHING: —to give statements. Would you say that most issues are onceoff matters? Or is there a pattern—a long standing list of a pattern of issues?

Mr Johnston: I think that it is described as a culture, really, of being dismissive of some issues that have been previously raised. And some long-term employees are now giving that advice to the newer employees, saying, well do not speak up about that because I have been, you know, bringing that to attention for the last x amount of years and still have had no traction. So it is better just to stay quiet.

- This advice, to our knowledge, has never been given to those of us who are “new”

employees. The attitude that we cannot change an issue that we have brought attention to is the complete opposite to the culture which current management has been striving to create. We feel this statement inaccurately portrays our experience of the work environment at DPS as it pertains to us.

Statement 3

Mr Bubb: *Well, I know that our members have gone through HR and HR have not shown any interest and the blokes have given up in reporting to HR. So you know, we are trying to get a culture back into the house where they feel comfortable enough to be able to talk to management because at the moment, they do not feel like they can trust management with their issues. So we are trying to get that culture back where we have the meetings with management and the workers to try and rebuild that trust between management and the employees, so but we just—you know, we are the conduit between you know, the workshop—or for the maintenance-type people and management and that is clear there was a disconnect and obviously we—we are meant to play a big part in getting this connection back because from what we are seeing and certainly what we are hearing is that it is a toxic work environment and obviously we cannot have our members of EBU or non-members going to the work place where they feel that they are intimidated and they just want to get comfortable and do their job, go home and the— well, except we have got people that are off on stress leave throughout that process as well. We would not accept that in any workplace, let alone Parliament. I mean, everybody looks up to Parliament and their expectation would be that if there is a workplace that is—you know, in hitting the bar as far as leases go, well, this is it. And I am pretty sure if we went into any workplace and said you would not believe what was going on at Parliament, they would not believe it. They just would not believe it. And at the last meeting, you took us back—because when one of the employees come out and said that they could not even approach management. It was—so it took us back to the fact that they felt that they could not even talk to management. They were unapproachable, that tell us that we have got a pretty major problem there on the floor to management. So yeah, that was a bit of a shock, to us, that one.*

Senator KITCHING: *That is the middle level of management?*

Mr Bubb: *Yeah.*

- We have had multiple workshop “toolbox” style meetings, some on a weekly basis, and others monthly, in which we are all given the opportunity to put forwards concerns or issues. Not once have these meetings been intimidating or designed to create stress or an uncomfortable workplace environment.
- The vast majority of our workgroup do not feel intimidated or belittled by our management, and feel that this is the first time we have been given the opportunity to action change

Statement 4

Mr Bubb: *It is a combination of both. Because there is also another comment around tradesmen with years of experience being referred to as junior staff. They—that is quite insulting to—to our senior members. So we have also—have trade staff going to counselling just for advice and help. And again, these are—these are only comments from before. Managers covering up mistakes to protect their favoured workers. We have nowhere to turn for support, as upper management are mates and look after one another (boys’ club). We have had staff leave just because they cannot put up with managers anymore, not because they were looking for more money. The environment in the*

workshop is toxic, which is obviously a basic one. Basically splitting us into two groups. I think what they were talking about there, there was a feeling that there was an older worker's group and a younger worker's group and there may have been some difference in treatment.

Senator ROBERTS: And who was being favoured?

Mr Windsor: The younger guys.

Mr Bubb: Yeah, the younger guys. That—the younger people. That—that was the feeling.

Senator ROBERTS: Why was that? I can guess.

Mr Windsor: Well, they were not sort of speaking up as much, as probably what the older guys were.

Senator ROBERTS: That a guess.

Mr Windsor: Yeah.

- We would like evidence supplied as to how the 'younger guys' are being favoured, as we have witnessed a very fair and even approach to being provided with opportunity to advance our career within DPS. We would also like evidence about the apparent 'Managers covering up mistakes to protect their favoured workers'. In our experience, mistakes of any employee have been brought forward privately as an opportunity to learn and improve our trade, not as punishment, and not as a way to hide the mistake.

At no point has management approached any younger team member specifically due to their age, and have often offered opportunities to the senior trade staff first, only then offering them to the younger members after being turned down by the senior trade staff.

- We also feel it is unfair to state, as a guess to the reasoning behind the alleged favoritism, that it is due to '...they were not sort of speaking up as much, as probably what the older guys were.' To provide a speculative guess in an inquiry without first canvassing the workforce or being able to provide direct evidence of the alleged favoritism paint our entire workshop in an unflattering, and unsubstantiated light.

Statement 5

THE CHAIR: Do you think that COVID has had any impact on that? I am just trying to think of what might have changed within the last 18 months to bring that change.

Mr Windsor: What my workers have told me in the last 18 months, there was some management change, so, I believe was certain manager came in and things changed a little bit in all honesty.

- The management change in the past 18 months has been accepted as positive almost universally in the workshop.

The particular manager that we feel this may refer to has never exhibited any unprofessional or inappropriate behavior in our experience.

Conclusion:

We would, in conclusion, like to extend our complete support to our middle and upper management during the past 18 months. We have never felt more supported or heard than now, and have never experienced a more positive change that is equitable to our entire workshop.

We wholeheartedly agree with and support our middle management and Executive team, and would like to conclude with what we believe is the truest statement in the Transcript, which was part of an address from our Secretary, Rob Stefanic:

'...much of the information being provided to the CPSU lacks integrity. It is apparent from sitting here this morning that misinformation is being provided to the other unions also appearing here today.

The words management and toxic have been used in various and general lies ways but with limited actual examples. We can address the examples they have given today, particularly the concerning ones about safety.

I am proud to say that DPS is far removed from the organisation that was last reviewed by this committee. We actively live the parliamentary service values and expect all our staff to do the same. We manage our administrative and legal processes properly. We meet our accountability requirements under strong scrutiny. We consult with and respond to issues raised by our staff, particularly through workplace forums.'

We write this document today because we have been shown support from our management, and we believe it is time we support them in this same way. We believe that whilst some of the statements made in this Inquiry are representative of some employee's opinions, they are not representative of the majority, and that they do not paint a complete or accurate picture of the culture in the Mechanical Services workshop, or in Maintenance Services.

As we are, for now, remaining unnamed, we shall simply say that we write this in sincere hope that it can help provide a differing perspective in to the Parliamentary Inquiry. We are also happy to provide our names and details should the need arise.