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**From:**

**Sent:** Wednesday, 15 August 2012 5:40 PM

**Subject:** Statement for the inquiry on workplace bullying. Standing Committee on Education and Employment. 17 August 2012

## Statement for the inquiry on workplace bullying. Standing Committee on Education and Employment. 17 August 2012

My name is

I currently work for the

In January 2009 I took Leave with out pay under the Member of Parliamentary Services act to take up a position with Liberal Senator as an Executive Assistant. As part of this position I assisted in the management of opposition business in the Senate and advised and provided briefing on issues, specifically I provided briefing for the Senate estimates. In March 2009 the leadership of the Liberal party had changed and my position became dissolved.

Upon returning to colleagues had brought to my attention that some people in 'management' were not happy with my involvement with the liberal party during the senate estimates process.

In August 2009 I had a meeting with Director of Staffing Section , and team leader regarding career progression. During that meeting stated that

*'she had noticed questions being asked in Senate Estimates about indigenous cadets, postings and payment of HECS. These questions were based directly on knowledge had acquired through his employment with the Department and on issues known to be of concern to him personally. It was her personal view that perhaps had not displayed good judgment in writing questions attributable to him in attempting to embarrass and discredit the Department. She noted there had been no subsequent Code of Conduct investigation launched by the Department. emphasised that she did not wish to discuss the matter further as this meeting was not a code of conduct investigation and she did not manage conduct issues.'*

I considered the comments to be threatening and an attack on my political affiliation.

In early 2011 I made a complaint with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) regarding discrimination and bullying due to my political affiliation. The HRC provided a conciliation meeting where the department and I agreed to disagree on the issues raised; I was however provided a letter of regret. In addition to my complaint with the HRC, the then Assistant Secretary of Staffing Branch, , had provided my supervisors information regarding my complaint to the HRC. This caused major conflict in the workplace between me and my supervisors.

By mid 2011 The targeted attacks by staffing branch and conflict in the work place started to take its toll on me. By July 2011 I started to show symptoms of depression (insomnia, melancholy, unable to concentrate) and by August 2011 my GP diagnosed me with severe depression. This occurred after I, (due to a hostile work environment) attempted suicide in late July 2011. At the time I took a number of weeks off (as advised by my doctor) I also put in a claim with Comcare for workers compensation. My claim was accepted. I returned to the work place in September 2011. In early December I unfortunately had another depressive episode and was again on sick leave covered under comcare, this time for three months. During this time the Department wrote a letter to my GP and Psychologist accusing me of being psychotic and advising them that I was faking having depression. My doctors refuted these accusations.

In March 2012 I returned to the workplace. At his time I had asked if I could move to another section within my Branch as I was not comfortable with the certain amount of stigmatisation I was experiencing from my new Director and a work colleague. This request was denied. I also had a return to work meeting with the First Assistant secretary of the Corporate Management Division, , where during the meeting I advised that I was feeling better but unfortunately with depression it can relapse and that anyone is susceptible to having depression, ' response was to laugh at me and advise me, words to the effect 'that it was a good piece of information for him to have'. Additionally In March this year I also had my

performance review and I was ranked as Performing satisfactory and one of the lowest performers in my division, this is the first time in my career that I was ranked this low and this I did not receive my bonus for the last financial year due to it. During the meeting to discuss my performance evaluation my Union representatives have observed what can only be explained as discrimination due to being diagnosed with depression. More evidence of this was shown when I went to being ranked equal second for an overseas assignment by my parent division to being ranked last as soon as they became aware that I had depression. Most recently I was advised by a [redacted] that I was short listed for a position at that [redacted] and yet on the feedback provided by staffing branch I was 'Not ranked' for the position. As a result of this adverse treatment I again went on sick leave from mid April 2012 to mid-August 2012.

I am now back at work again on reduced hours however the department has chosen to make no changes to its management style nor will it respond to my requests or Union requests for information or resolution. My rehab provider has been advised that I will be banned from [redacted] assignment or training opportunities for up to three years due to having depression and a comcare claim, yet there is no policy that outlines this. It is clear that I am facing retribution for making a comcare claim. I fear that I again will become a victim of workplace bullying and find myself on long term sick leave including possibly resulting in a permanent disability.

I am a ten year career officer with [redacted], I have worked in policy, media liaison and public diplomacy. I was the most junior member of the team that went to [redacted]. I currently work in [redacted] where I have volunteered for emergency call work when no one else would, I managed teams of up to 15 people at a time during major crises such as the [redacted] and [redacted] crisis, normally under stressful conditions including night shifts that no one else wanted or would do. On a daily basis I deal with grieving families, worried mothers and families of drug dealers, paedophiles and murders without complaining or having one stressful incident. I trained new staff from scratch and volunteered to undertake additional duties that others wouldn't do and i watched others get ahead of me while doing it.

I take great pride in being a public servant I will continue to do my job as the very good [redacted] officer that I know I am. Not for the department or government but for myself and the clients that need me to be good at my job.

All though I fear that the department will continue to isolate me and bully me, I will refuse to be bullied out of a job due to my political affiliation or mental health status. In the right circumstances depression can be managed and it can be beaten. I have shown this. [redacted] does not attempt to provide that environment to its employees. It is quite the opposite. Upon returning the workplace the onus on recovery is 100 per cent on the employee. The employer takes no responsibility other than to agree to reduced hours for a two week period. I am required to face the same discrimination as before with the advice of 'suck it up' or get out. It is clear that I will not have a career with [redacted], they will make sure I am not [redacted] they will make sure that I do not receive the opportunities for career development, while the mangers who

bully, stigmatize and continue to damage the well being of staff prosper with positions and quick

This inquiry has the opportunity to make recommendations that can change the way people are treated in the workplace for the better. Suicide kills more Australian men between the age of 25 and 35 than car accidents or skin cancer. This statistic is simply disturbing for a country like Australia. Workplace bullying contributes to this statistic. We need to educate managers and change the culture of cronyism that exists in our public service particularly . If not the damage to officers lives and family could be irreversible.