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SUBMISSION RE: WORKPLACE BULLYING

Thank you for taking the time to consider my submission. I have addressed the terms of reference as below:

"The prevalence in Australia and the experience of victims":

Recently I have been the victim of bullying and harassment in the workplace. My employer employed a fellow as Group Manager Property Services approximately 10 months ago. He has performed well technically, however, made it very difficult for a handful of employees who reported to him, mostly women.

His behaviour to myself and the others was demeaning, belittling and very unreasonable. Two employees left the organisation as a direct result of his bullying. One of them noted on their exit form, delivered to the Human Relations (HR) area, stated words to the effect of "I am leaving the organisation as a direct result of senior management's failure to stop bullying and harassment in the property area". This was ignored by HR.

Many complaints were made to HR regarding this fellow's behaviour but all ignored with the contact in HR saying words to the effect of "you will need to learn how to communicate better".

I am a well educated person (including Associate degree in Law and Masters in OHS) and was treated like a child.

Numerous complaints were also made by me to the Workplace Relations department as well from at least 5 other fellow employees and an external labour hire company.

I believe the Executive Manager of HR did speak to this person, but nothing changed. His behaviour continued.

During a meeting with this fellow, mid February, I could not take the belittling and badgering any more and terminated the meeting. Following this I had a nervous breakdown. On assessment with a clinical psychologist I was found to have "extreme" anxiety (In the top 99 percentile). I was also diagnosed with "post traumatic stress disorder" by my doctor. I was on workers compensation for 3 months and am now on a back to work plan reporting to another manager.

An external company was brought in to investigate. The finding was that this fellow was guilty of bullying and harassment. To date I do not see any disciplinary action against this fellow. In fact he was given a high profile job on a committee looking into amalgamation of our three entities.

The organisation has strong policies in place regarding bullying and harassment and a supposedly "zero" tolerance. However, it appears that this policy is not enforced. Not worth the paper it is written on really.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

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The bullying in the property area is septic. This fellow has a few "chosen ones" and they are encouraged to use the same bullying tactics. There are another two employees that report through to this fellow on leave as well at the moment (one on workers compensation and one on sick leave).

I have also witnessed a growing amount of bullying and harassment in the workplace of fellow employees throughout the organisation.

Until such a time that the organisation "shames and blames" these individuals, as they do with physical injuries things will not change. The organisation needs to be firm and enforce the so called "zero tolerance" values. Until then nothing will change.

"The scope to improve . . . government"s:

I am of the firm belief that until these "confirmed" workplace incidents are brought under the same regulations as physical injuries nothing will change i.e. reportable to WorkCover.

I am very confident that if the organisation had to go through the same stringent WorkCover investigations as it does with physical injuries the matter would have been dealt with completely differently. The organisation jumps through hoops to show how they are making improvements with those types of incidents.

I am willing to discuss my situation and ideas regarding improvements further if required.