

[REDACTED]

Submission to the Inquiry into Workplace Bullying.

**If the law cannot protect its citizens in the
Office how is it going to
protect the general citizenry elsewhere?**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Included in this submission is the complaint that I sent to the Professional Standards Branch of

[REDACTED].

The documented complaint gives indication of how virulent abuse can be.

I have complained to the Professional Standards Branch of [REDACTED] and the outcome was that no one remembers anything and that my complaint could not be verified even though my complaint identified many witnesses. I was also told that the problem was that I was used to working in gentle environments which I took to mean that the fault was really mine, the victim. I was also told that the position that I was bullied out of was already taken which I subsequently found not to be true when it was advertised later. When I made application I was refused as it was deemed an internal vacancy and I was not eligible to apply.

Even though it is claimed that my complaint could not be verified I do not recant one single word. I have removed the names of the responsible officers because I am uncertain of my legal position with

regards to their disclosure. During training it is explained to officers that it is illegal to discuss what happens within [REDACTED].

I find it appalling that the only place that I have seen people totally unprotected by law is within the [REDACTED] Department. This is a very very important point. If abuse and bullying can exist in such a robust manner within the [REDACTED] Department how effective can the law be in preventing it elsewhere.

Lord Denning described Magna Carta as "the greatest constitutional document of all times – the foundation of the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of the despot". In this case the senior officers of [REDACTED].

The reason that people can be removed from the protection of law is the support that the bullies find within their groups and in some cases the organisation. It is difficult for bullying to exist in its own right and it depends upon the support of other people. The complaint process is a pointless exercise which allows the abuse to perpetuate.

Vulnerable officers are aware that there is no point to making complaint and that complaint can result in career damage or loss of job. Within [REDACTED] it is very easy to set people up for failure and easy to find avenues to destroy vulnerable officers. The processes available for junior officers to find remedy are theatre and not practical.

It is not enough that workplace bullying is illegal; the code of silence that allows it to exist must also be made illegal with penalties consistent with participation in the bullying itself.

I urge you to consider the case of John Satatas who was bullied in the ADF until he was found hanged with a beard drawn on his face and the words Spik and Spiros written upon him.

The Australian August 2008:

In Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, tearful parents said their claims were aimed at revealing a culture of bullying and intimidation in the armed forces and opening up the system of military justice to independent investigation. Some of the parents are now pressing for an independent court to be established to hear charges against senior officers, and the federal Government is under pressure to make Australia's military courts fully independent, as recommended by a 2005 Senate inquiry.

In Melbourne, Rosa Satatas, mother of Gunner John Satatas, 19, who was found hanged at Holsworthy Army Base in Sydney's southwest in April 2003, alleged that her son's Portuguese background was a factor in his death and that soldiers returning from duty in East Timor were hard on him as a result.

Mrs Satatas had told a Senate inquiry that in the weeks leading up to his death, her son was subjected to racial abuse and assaults. When his body was found, the word "Spic" had been written on his forehead in felt-tipped pen and the word "Spiros" on his arm. A beard and moustache were drawn on his face.

Mrs Satatas said yesterday that, prior to his death, her son had told her that an officer, whose name she had been prevented from discovering, told members of his unit, "With this wog, you can do whatever you want - won't be charges

taken." Crying, she said: "He treated him like a dog. I just want to know who this person is, but they won't show the names on the investigation."

Also in Melbourne, Wendy and Adrian Hayward alleged that they were bullied and threatened by the army after the suicide of their son David, 20, who was AWOL for more than two months before his death in March 2004.

They said that a few days after his death they were told, "If you discuss this report with anybody it's a federal offence, you'll go to prison". Mrs Hayward, who said the pain of her son's death, had reached so deep that "you can't hurt any more", said she felt frightened by the threat.

"Can you imagine: losing your child and then having to deal with that?" she said.

This soldier was surrounded by many other soldiers and if only one of them had the courage and integrity to say, "This is not right and must stop" it would have. Now he is dead. When bullying can flourish it becomes an endemic cultural infestation.

The law needs to support those that defend justice and persecute those that deny it. Not only the direct perpetrators but also for those that support them in their silence.

I am awaiting the outcome on an FOI request for the documented outcome of the investigation into my complaint as I only have a verbal outcome at the moment. I will forward it to this enquiry when I receive it.

Kind regards

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