

To: Secretary for Committee on Education and Employment
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

JE.

Dear Secretary

Re: Inquiry into workplace bullying.

My Name is . I am a victim of workplace bullying.

Initially I had decided not to write to this inquiry as my situation is a hopeless one and I felt any outcomes of this inquiry cannot help me now. I will be unemployed and unemployable for a very long time. However, I noticed submissions from both David Lander and Evelyn Field which encouraged me to change my mind. I sincerely hope the committee will seriously consider their contributions.

Background

My experience of workplace bullying occurred while employed with while working at a site in Western Australia 2002/2003. The bullying resulted in an assault upon me inside the office of a senior manager. My husband and I returned to Canberra immediately after the assault incident. We were meant to be there for 3 years and stayed only 1.

Upon return to in Canberra, the rumours and innuendos had already started over my giving false and exaggerated allegations. These rumours were coming from senior management.

There were two internal investigations into the matter. The first conducted by a Humans Resources person at in Western Australia whom found there was no case to answer. I was never interviewed for this investigation.

A second internal investigation conducted from Canberra also found there was no case to answer. On the matter of the assault I filed a report with NSW Police as I live in Queanbeyan. However, it was never pursued. Between NSW Police, WA Police and the Australia Federal Police (the assault occurred on Crown land), no-one could decide who's jurisdiction it was.

There was no denying by senior management that "something" happened in Western Australia. But it had become clear and obvious at this stage that they were closing ranks on my complaint and new how to shut it down.

This was the worst time of my life. And I was naive to think it would end here.

Comcare Claim

I lodged an insurance claim which was accepted by Comcare in 2004 with the date of injury being March 2003. At that time my employer had to sign the application form before Comcare would accept it. It took Human Resources 6 weeks to put a signature to my application.

The acceptance of my claim was followed by further persecution from my employer. My case managers were handled by entry level personnel in Human Resources whom had no expertise on the matter. I left work in April 2004 (and have subsequently not returned). By then irreparable damage had already been made to my well being. I was a basket case. I started a program of regular psychiatric and psychological counselling and prescribed medications for anxiety and sleeping deprivation. I engaged in legal counsel to help me with my case.

My Comcare claim enabled me to be removed from that work environment but it has not protected me from persecution by my employer. In some instances Comcare have been complicit in this.

The management of my case now fell under the broader umbrella of the . refused to accept that I could never return to my pre-injury duties despite medical reports supporting this. Under a rehabilitation program with the rehabilitation provider a vocational assessment was made. I was encouraged by the rehabilitation provider to undertake an electrical apprentice and work outside the public service. This could work under a trusted and understanding employer. These attempts were sabotaged by after a letter written, by them, was sent to the ACT training Authority. Based on this letter the ACT Training Authority reversed their decision to accept the apprenticeship after nearly 12 months of training - an apprenticeship that I would have, by now, completed had I been supported by Comcare and . Both and the ACT training Authority refused to provide a copy of this letter when requested. I was sent for, yet another, psychiatric assessment by Comcare. Comcare wrote to the to assessing physician asserting that I had never received approval to undertake the apprenticeship. After my protestations Comcare subsequently wrote a letter of correction to the physician.

The employer that injured me still manages my case, even though I have requested them to be removed and an independent body manage my case. I have been sent through a plethora of psychiatric assessments in an attempt to return me to that same work environment. All of these assessments supporting my case are either not read or ignored by and Comcare.

There has been correspondence and communication exchanged between and Comcare that I believe have influenced Comcare's decision making -correspondence that I have not been privy to nor given the opportunity to respond to before their final decision. I am only to read about it after the fact.

It would seem that Comcare is more sensitive their own key performance indicators and to their paying clients needs than the victim's needs.

To add insult to injury Comcare used, what I believe to be, me and the apprenticeship as a case study in a recently published Case Manager's Guide. This case study is presented as a success story.

Current.

I am now officially Permanently Impaired. My life and hope of having a career has been wrecked and it could have been avoided.

The mistrust I have for Comcare, the Comcare system and my, then, Employer is permanent. I regard my employer as the perpetrator yet they remain in charge of managing my recovery. The power and control of managing my own recovery has been taken away from me in exchange for a bureaucratic process. Instead authorities with competing interests are in charge. This is a hopeless situation for me. This could never work. It has not worked - it has only made my condition permanent.

Today, I am unable to control my anxiety attacks. I can't just "turn it off" like a light switch. Often I can't tell what has triggered the attacks. I can only try to manage it the best way I know how. My sleep has never returned to normal. Most days I feel chronically fatigued.

My income has been reduced. I cannot be promoted. I am having to constantly re-engage in expensive legal counselling due to the Comcare process. I have had to accept unfair Comcare decisions to avoid further legal costs. Everyday my husband screens our phone calls and mail. My husband left the public service because of my experience in the public service. He is now a self-employed sole trader but earns much less than used to. We have no health insurance. We have no contributing super. We are looking further at dropping some of our other insurance covers to reduce expenses.

We have endured a huge loss because of workplace bullying. And the relevant authorities that professedly claim to be doing a great job of taking care of the injured, have been part of the problem.

Recommendations.

From my own experience I think the following two recommendations would be beneficial to victims of bullying.

1. More control needs to be returned to the victims of bullying and their treating physicians over matters of rehabilitation and recovery. The employer should not have a voice in this.
2. More control needs be returned to independent Rehabilitation providers in matters of return to work programs in agreement with treating physicians. Legislative barriers and constraints need to be removed.

Thank you for this inquiry.