

**Parliamentary inquiry into workplace bullying**  
**Tuesday 11 July 2012**

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I have worked for over 30 years in a secretarial support role, working mostly for large organisations across a wide range of organisational sectors (private, local government, state government, federal government, health sector, etc.). I believe that workplace bullying has always been around, the only different being is that it is now not always stopped. The following are some issues which I believe contribute to workplace bullying occurring:

- reduced staff resourcing in organisations allows one person to be responsible for a person's salary as well as annual and other leave entitlements (recorded or unrecorded). This gives a bully access to "control" vulnerable people and also to stop others from speaking out;
- policies and procedures are continually improved, this can be either utilised in a positive way or allow victims of bullying to have to go through a complex process before any action is taken. This ensure that on top of being bullied the victim has to continually prepare for processes which overall tend to not want a bullying charge to progress;
- bullying tends to show casualties (in statistics on excessive leave (if recorded), sickness leave, mood swings of staff, low morale, outbursts by staff or excessive quiet, etc.) and can be isolated to branches only. An organisation can hide these statistics by reporting organisational statistics as one and not breaking down these branch by branch. This tends to average out relevant statistics;
- exit interviews mentioning bullying tend to be filed – nothing can be done as the staff member has left. Not always are these responses followed up even if several people report the same bullying from the same managers;
- often part of the bullying mentality is to discuss the victim in a negative way so as to discredit that person;
- in a bullying environment staff tend to be discouraged from talking to each other – this tends to create mistrust in the area and no-one knows who they can trust to talk about the problem;
- subtle innuendos (eg not providing adequate information to complete their work, performance management, locking out access to documents, deleting work, obtaining a person's computer password and checking everything that they do, etc) are some of the things that upset the victim more.

The above are just some of the issues that I have experienced in the workforce. After being with an organisation and area for many years I suddenly didn't receive a salary increment and a number of unconstructive negative comments were put on my performance development review. I took this to "the process" (and added bullying and harassment issues along the way as this occurred). This has been on-going for a year now and co-incidentally I received another outcome today (which was no change). However I was told that the organisation has made a final decision, they said that I have the right to go further along the process and that I would be ok for my next performance development review as my manager believes that my performance has improved. During this lengthy process my position title has been changed (to a better title) and I have been deemed to have been working a 1 eft (equivalent full-time) role in my 0.8 eft (equivalent full-time) (which I only reduced due to pressure of these non-work issues at work).