



Inquiry into Workplace Bullying Submission

- December 2008 –Background – I was working in an operational Group that had just had a change in Senior Executive managers due to current SES leaving the department and the transfer of an SES Officer to being the new SES manager of the Group. I applied for the new role of Director of another group to gain more corporate knowledge, further my development and provide existing expertise through rotation – and also because I was beginning to burn-out. The Executive Manager of HR (SES Band 1) told me that a decision had been made that I was ‘too valuable’ to move based on discussions with Acting Deputy Commissioner (SES Band 2) and Commissioner (SES Band 3). The new SES officer ‘required support’. Therefore, I remained in the group to support the new Senior Executive (SES band 1). My managers had not raised personal development with me so it was left to me to pursue. I raised concerns about encouraging rotation to strengthen the management team and sent a minute to the Executive Manager of HR (SES Band 1). I found I was actually starting to burn out, and felt very let down by the Executive and Corporate levels as verbally encourages development and rotation to ensure succession, retention and development. With my request for rotation rejected out of hand and ignored, I felt had no option than to try to tough it out against burnout, knowing that I had been denied opportunities for rotation and development. I felt I was being used unfairly.
- February 20, 2009 – During a phone call from Acting Deputy Commissioner (SES Band 2), he abused me and called me names, including ‘feral’ several times, and questioned my loyalty and commitment to the department. I immediately felt abused, insulted and shocked at the lack of professional behaviour by the Acting Deputy Commissioner. I was appalled at the lack of professional behaviour and got very upset. I felt hurt that I was disrespected, and disappointed at being spoken to like this. The Acting Deputy Commissioner had intimidated me with his behaviour and I realised I was afraid of him. Generally, I am a confident individual but this matter had really impacted my inner-strength.. I did not think that it was appropriate for him to call me names and I questioned his leadership and professionalism. As I was shocked, I began crying, I felt embarrassed as this had happened at my desk in front of my staff. My staff had known me to be courageous in our work, and now AI felt that I was letting myself and my team down. I have never been treated like this before. I left the floor with staff following me to see if I was okay. I walked to HR still crying and upset and was very confused. I was looking for help but left still crying and feeling very harassed. I felt HR did not take the matter seriously because they said "at times staff say upsetting things”
- My manager and I spoke by phone –and based on that conversation with her I felt very let down that it appeared she did not support me at all but that they were working together to find out what I was going to do about the abuse. She gave me the impression that proper action would not follow; such as fixing the damage done. I was too embarrassed, humiliated and upset to return to work and left work.
- The Acting Deputy Commissioner called me after I left work trying to find out what I was going to do about his behaviour and repeatedly applied pressure that I should do nothing, he said ".he expected 100% support from me and we need to move on.” I could not think straight as I was upset and hurt, and felt intimidated that I should do nothing about the abuse and name calling. I was upset all weekend and on Monday 23 February I could not walk in the door of the department as I was worried about seeing the Acting Deputy Commissioner and feeling nauseous. I was so scared that if I saw him and he tried to speak to me I would be sick and start crying again as I was still very upset. I called my manager to say I would not be in that day. She said, this will not look good’ for me if I

did not come to work. I felt she was colluding with him by putting more pressure on me. Based on that conversation I felt unsupported by her. I went to see my doctor and explained what had happened and how upset and I was feeling. The conversation with my boss was rolling around in my head and I felt that if I did not return to work after 3 days off I would be further intimidated.–

When I returned to work later that week, I found the Acting Deputy Commissioner had sent me an email on Friday February. When I read that email I felt that he was denying responsibility for what he said by blaming other people. It was disappointing that a SES band 2 would behave so unprofessionally. He blamed other staff for him calling me ‘feral’ and demanded I provide him 100% support even when he did not show me any respect and called me ‘feral’. I worried so much because I was supposed to work with him but did not have any confidence, trust or faith in him. I now realised I did not trust him. He then sent me an additional email and booked meetings with me. He wanted to discuss the incident in private. I did not want to discuss this with him alone and possibly not with a support person either. Still being very upset I was working thru what I would do about it. The emails he sent and booked meetings (just him and me) in a meeting room (I declined the meetings) – just him and me. I felt scared and intimidated as I did not want to meet with him alone, I felt very stressed at work; I felt that he was going to continue to pressure me more to do nothing about his behaviour.

He then further intimidated me by unexpectedly coming up behind me at my desk, unannounced, late on a Friday afternoon and insisted I go with him into a meeting room alone. I felt terrified, totally defenceless and couldn’t think straight. I felt I was being told to go into a meeting room alone with him on a Friday afternoon to face more harassment. I felt intimidated and physically cornered as many staff had left for the weekend. I asked him to leave once I confirmed that if it was not a work matter, I did not want to talk to him about his continuing behaviour. He got a chair and sat right in front of me, very closely, to discuss what was going to happen. I felt I could not escape as he had blocked me in.

I began to feel scared and embarrassed and was getting really upset in front of the staff on the floor who began to hear that I was upset. I was shaking from fear, hurt and upset. I even agreed to consider meeting with him the following week just to get rid of him, thinking and hoping he would leave me alone. He is a Acting Deputy Commissioner and I was starting to be scared about what he could do if I did formally complain. I could feel my blood pressure rising and more as I became more upset which resulted in nose bleeds over the weekend. He then sent a meeting appointment on 2 March which I declined as I could not trust him and as aforesaid only agreed to consider a meeting as I was intimidated and scared and wanted him to go away.

March 2009 - During March I had to attend some normal work matter meetings with the Deputy Commissioner (and others) and I made sure I was never alone with him. In meetings he and I only talked when needed on business matters. I was feeling like I had to hold myself together during these meetings as there was talk through the office about the behaviour. I felt like I was under a microscope with staff watching my actions.

After weeks of anxiety, and feeling there was no other alternative, I lodged a formal complaint with the Commissioner. Strangely, that complaint went missing as reportedly, no-one had read it. I felt even more scared when I learnt that it had disappeared and felt ignored and that my matter was dismissed and not taken seriously. I felt my manager was isolating me because of this as she made me feel like I was the one who had something to prove regarding ‘coming to work.’ And lack of concern. I felt I had suffered career damage by complaining.

Next, I personally handed the complaint again to the Commissioner (SES Band 3) upon his return to work in April 2009. When I handed him the complaint he immediately replied he was shocked that I was putting in a complaint. I immediately felt unsupported, as I was shown no empathy by the Commissioner of the department, and was now shocked at his behaviour. I felt that he believed that it was an acceptable culture to call people names in _____ and that I was stupid for complaining.

May 2009 - During May I waited for an acknowledgement and advice about the status of my complaint as I had not received a reply from the Commissioner. I was not surprised as it appeared he was distancing himself from the situation, the Commissioner had not even asked how I was – I felt ostracised by him. I was concerned that the Commissioner had not taken my complaint seriously. His reaction was one of shock and I felt that he was upset with me for acting within my APSC rights and informing him of harmful and unprofessional behaviour. I had asked that there be no reprisals for complaining especially as it was against a SES Band 2. Yet I felt that there was reprisals from the Commissioner straight away as he treated me differently with his behaviour when I handed him the complaint.

14 May 2009 - The 2nd Deputy Commissioner – (SES Band 2) requested a meeting with me in May 2009. I was very nervous and anxious about the meeting as no subject or reason was given to me. Based on our discussion, I understood that she was using the ‘soft approach’ and she admitted she did not know how to run a complaint. I felt ill thinking that she had not been taking my complaint seriously, that she did not respect me enough to provide a reason for the meeting. She was not his boss, but a peer and should not have dealt with this. I felt that the Commissioner totally ignored my complaint and I felt he did not take accountability for managing the complaint and treating me with respect. I was feeling totally bullied and marginalised by the Commissioner and others involved as I felt they just did not care about abuse and name calling in the department. I was left feeling isolated and unsupported throughout the process as it appeared they did not know how to manage a complaint and the Commissioner not discussing the matter on how to manage the process. I felt nauseous whenever I came near people as I was never sure what their intentions were. In May I also asked questions about the recruitment process of the Acting Deputy Commissioner position occupied by the acting Deputy Commissioner with Manager HR and based on that conversation I became extremely upset and nervous and scared to raise any further matters. I felt there was a total whitewash of his behaviour and my complaint – and that I was being further victimised for complaining when it was my right not to put up with unprofessional behaviour.

June, July, August 2009 - During June, July and August – my nose was bleeding more frequently and I felt tense as I was on alert all the time at work. The stress caused me to worry about my health and I felt my blood pressure was up all the time and had been to the doctor - my blood pressure was up and my nose bleeds continued when stressed- other staff just stared and whispered as I walked by. I was upset when I got home as I felt so tight through the day that I cried almost every day worrying about what was coming next. During this time the complaint was validated externally, but I felt like there were reprisals because I had complained – For example- The way the Acting Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner treated me like they did not care and certainly there was no duty of care or respect shown towards me to manage the process with empathy. Their apparent lack of communication seemed dismissive and disrespectful and left me more frightened and intimidated. It appeared to me that retaliation was occurring about my lodging a complaint as the Commissioner was treating me differently as mentioned above and the meeting below mentioned in August.

In August I met with the Commissioner and Manager (HR) to discuss the outcome of the complaint and based on this meeting I now understood and felt very clearly from the Commissioner's tone and body language that I was isolated from his support, marginalised and victimised for raising the complaint. I felt that he was protecting the Acting Deputy Commissioner. My confidence was starting to be impacted and I was more inclined to become teary at work, my nose bleeds continued and I could feel my blood pressure going up when this happened. When I mentioned respect in the meeting, the Commissioner turned away from me and did not face me. It was like he did not want to discuss the notion of 'respect.' I realised the meeting was finished and I was disgusted with his behaviour towards me. I knew this was getting worse and also that my self-esteem was going down and I did not have any confidence to look for a job elsewhere, I felt beaten down and was finding it harder to try to get myself up and going.

September, October, and November 2009 – The commissioner had stated in the findings of the complaint that the Acting Deputy Commissioner had to apologise personally – I would have appreciated this and also been able to respond to Acting Deputy Commissioner in a safe environment about how he made me feel when he treated me that way. However due to how the communications between the Commissioner and myself made me feel, it was taking me some time to even meet with Acting Deputy Commissioner in a safe environment – as I was now feeling bullied and sidelined by the Commissioner as well. Acting Deputy Commissioner left the department suddenly at end of 2010 (almost 2 years after the incident) without personally apologising to me. I felt let down and betrayed by the Commissioner. I felt they did not care about the APSC Code of Conduct and Values. So the complaint remained unresolved and I felt that they wanted it this way to show me and possibly others how staff who submit a complaint are treated. I felt intimidated and bullied by raising it again until recently for fear that it would cause more reprisals. I feel that the department is treating me different because I had lodged a complaint about being abused and called feral. The Commissioner and I communicated during these months via letters and I realised he was not interested in trying to complete the process – I felt totally confused and let down by the commissioner – it was like I should have learnt that lesson by now – I now trust no one..

During 2009 my boss went on leave for a week and I was asked to do higher duties at SES band 1. But while I acted in this role I was told I would not be paid at the appropriate level because they had no money. Although, the group had come in under budget, once again I felt abused as I had been asked to do a job at a higher level but not paid accordingly. But other staff were being paid for their higher duties allowances. This showed me yet again that I was suffering from reprisals and senior management did not take seriously their responsibilities towards staff who had been abused.

I believed that this was part of a pattern of victimisation. Also, I felt that my work was at the highest standard but it was considered worthless and they did not acknowledge my commitment – although I had been assured in writing that no reprisals would occur from the Commissioner on 9 September 2009. I felt the reprisals were very visible and doing additional damage to my reputation.

- March to August 2009 - I had a massive workload (multiple teams, several committees, up to 10 direct reports at times, multiple projects and about 95-100 staff at times) and eventually raised concerns about this while scared that it would cause more retaliation and that I would be harassed further – I felt they had not distributed the workload in an equitable way. I felt that by increasing my workload beyond reasonable expectations they were further intimidating me to stop speaking up

about anything, and that it was also a further reprisal for complaining even though it was my right. I was terrified to raise this after discussions with Manager HR in May.

- My boss restructured the branch and brought in an EL2 to manage just one of my projects due to my massive workload. Then when another Director was leaving the department – my workload again was increased and I was responsible for the outgoing director's teams. I felt intimidated, used, bullied but did not complain for fear of what they may do. I felt burnt out. I had to raise once again the impact of this workload on my health and stress levels and my boss addressed the group explaining that the outgoing director would be replaced and that my responsibilities for the outgoing directors teams would then go to the incoming director. This did not really address my workload and I felt marginalised and continually harassed. I felt they knew I did a good job and were exploiting it at the cost of my health and well being.
- End 2009 - early 2010 - I was completely worn out and stressed all the time at work as I never knew what was coming at me next. I tried to put everything aside but felt betrayed and let down. I was anxious about the complaint not being finalised. I took long service leave in 2010 (March to end May and September) trying to recover from everything that had happened, would they again increase my workloads which I feel has caused part of the stresses with the complaint process. I was getting more emotional, tired - tried to push thru and I just wanted any excuse to get out of there for a while. I was worried about the impact on my job, my family and my future.
- In November 2010 there were discussions between my manager and I about what teams I would be leading. My boss asked me to have the teams discussed and as well also do 'stuff' as she stated. When my boss sent me an email on 18 November responding to my concerns about the workload – I felt threatened by her comment in response – “which doesn't help you nor the department”. I felt that she was intimidating me again over my career – I feel that because I liked a challenge they used and abused me giving me more work. When I did raise my concerns – I felt threatened, scared and did not know what to do – I felt my body boiling (blood pressure), teary and stressed everyday.
- January 2011 - Returning from sick leave, I learnt that I had been excluded from an important email sent by my boss saying that she had given my teams to another manager. An Expression of Interest had been published and a decision made to remove me from my role, but my manager had not even had the professionalism to inform me firstly. The email distribution had excluded me and I felt that I was again being targeted, manipulated, isolated and marginalised. I felt they were trying to keep me off balance as I had to find out from staff about the changes rather than being told by my boss. I felt distrust of my manager. I felt they were not showing me any respect. The acting SES mentioned that my boss was on leave and that she was 'taking care of a few things' during that time. I said that my boss had communicated to the group that someone else was leading those teams and that when I returned to work that day and had been removed from my role without notice or consultation. I felt betrayed by my SES officer, isolated and marginalised yet again. I had no job – I felt the confusion was actually marginalisation and probably deliberate. My reputation was being damaged and what I felt was absolutely worthless.

I was provided with another email - that also excluded me - informing the group that another manager would be acting SES. I felt disappointed about the lack of respect and consultation again and not being informed about these matters. I could not believe this was happening. I became very upset and went to see HR. There was a meeting with the acting SES and HR where they attempted to say that the email was 'wrong' that went to the teams. But I asked how could the email be wrong when my boss made a considered decision to action an Expression of Interest and made a decision to remove me from my role. It seemed highly unprofessional and a lack of management to do this. I

felt devastated, stressed and that reputation damage was being escalated. This caused constant nose bleeds and my blood pressure to worsen. I tried to stay calm but felt turmoil all the time. I cried more often and being upset all the time. I contacted the Commissioner (SES Band 3), to discuss my situation, being removed from my position - despite accolades about my performance and without reason or consultation contrary to proper processes and left without a position – this situation exacerbated my health problems considerably;

The Commissioner emailed me and incredibly and unbelievably he offered to ‘change my level’ – I felt that he meant demotion not promotion, rather than deal with the issues. I again felt betrayed and totally alone. I was stressed and everything that was happening was starting to impact seriously on my health and family life – I was defensive all the time, did not trust anyone and felt I could not keep my emotions under control. I took an annual leave day against my principles to get out of there as I had no work to do except for minimal tasks that took a couple of hours. I felt totally humiliated in front of my colleagues and embarrassed and knew that my reputation in the department was being damaged irreparably. I felt I was being set-up and potentially de-skilled.

I met with The Commissioner in January 2011. During the meeting he was pushing everything aside and not willing to address the issues. He was telling me to move on and get over it and/or find another job. I was now feeling constantly intimidated and scared as no one seemed to care about due process and policy that should be followed. After concluding the discussion and when leaving his office, he startled me by coming up behind me and placed his hand firmly on my shoulder. I froze momentarily wondering what he was doing but he kept it there until I moved free. I felt intimidated as the discussion had not gone well and I felt like he was physically intimidating and bullying me more to stop me from speaking up and doing anything about the issues. I absolutely abhorred the physical contact and intimidation which I felt constituted sexual harassment. I felt very unwelcome in trying to speak with the CEO and that he was unapproachable. I had determined from that meeting and his comments and tone meant nothing was going to happen to correct the situation. I was disappointed and felt that that he could not manage the situation and that now I was the one who had to find work. I felt clearly marginalised, and victimised for speaking up and constantly harassed. I felt betrayed by him as it seemed to me that he believed that nothing happened when in fact my role had been removed from me while I was absent from work and this was a pattern which had developed after I had lodged the complaint.

Later, Executive Manager HR assisted with giving me work in her team after I realised that no support was coming from the new Commissioner. I tried to be professional and give the work my total commitment and received very positive Senior Executive approval of work for HR. Soon I learnt that The Commissioner dismissed my stress concerns and called me a ‘Red Lady’ which I believe is now widely known to reflect discrimination. His personal staff told me that they would not wear red in his presence I was shocked that he called me this.

- February and March 2011 - feeling well marginalised working in HR, I felt totally victimised, without any support and having to cope with continuing inappropriate behaviour. It got worse. During a conversation with the Executive Manager HR, I noticed she was slowly and obviously looking me up and down in what I felt was an obvious sexual approach – this was at my desk. I felt so alone and scared and could not speak up as I felt no one would listen to me and also felt that everyone was behaving badly to keep me off balance and down. This caused me to become more and more anxious; I was getting very low and was not sure where to turn. I felt abused, dirty and worthless.
- February and March 2011 – The Executive Manager of HR discussed possible placements. I felt like I was sitting in the naughty corner and I felt everyone was looking at me. This was embarrassing

and degrading as the work/staff feedback I did in HR felt like I was just given something to do to keep me busy because I had no job. I felt totally demoralised. This situation was impacting my life with stress that should not happen.

- In March 2011 – eventually a role was found for me and I was placed in arguably the most stressful Director role in (IT), Director of Testing. This role required me to lead the teams including replacing existing management, improve performance and governance and addressing major cultural challenges. In ways I felt I was put there to fail as I do not have an IT degree but was assured that I was placed there for my leadership and people skills. Whilst I have been recently told by my manager that from the CEO down I had (all but) completed the task exceptionally well, the environment contributed to my deteriorating health as I was already feeling stressed, defensive, bullied and harassed; The role came with stresses that included the team having systemic historical issues that had never been addressed which meant that I addressed feedback with these staff that had never been addressed before. The role was stressful. A number of IT qualified Directors had refused to be moved into the position due to its degree of difficulty,
- March 2011 to March 2012 - During the IT placement, this became a permanent move. This placement was a challenge as I felt that no director previous to me had addressed the significant issues with management and culture. I experienced further inappropriate behaviour thru the Capital project worsening my health; I had continual nose bleeds when stressed and became more and more emotional. I felt intimidated when harassed by a project manager over a period of time due to others' behaviours and ever increasing changes to projects. For example – approve staff and budget and then state that it was not approved, remove budget for resources and required product but then expect the product to be completed. I felt they were trying to make it very difficult for me to manage a system project and push me out as I felt they were questioning my technical skills. I was feeling like I could not talk with them openly as they may distort the discussions. My trust levels with certain staff and management was at an all time low. I raised this with my manager (SES Band 1) I felt I could get some direction from him and we could discuss with the Project manager to resolve the ongoing antagonism and increasing issues, however I felt that it did not resolve any issues but probably made things worse. I was not an IT expert and had felt like they were setting me up to fail. I could see that the project team behaviour was changing and I felt that they were feeding off each other and starting to act as a group in the behaviour - possibly due to funding constraints and timing issues. This came to a head when in a meeting I was abused and felt scared when a director got (wrongly) upset at me and stood over the table with his arm raised and fingers pointed into my face and raising his voice and tone. I thought he was going to come across the table at me. I got upset and said to back off, I had to leave the room as I was crying, the stresses of bad behaviour were now reaching boiling point with me. I felt that it was all too hard and thought if I was not on the planet that there would be no more issues. I felt like I could not make it stop and no longer knew what to do. I have even been crying while writing this and having nose bleeds.
- January 2012 – I had been parking in the basement of the wing I work in. I came out to my car after work and there was a piece of paper in the windscreen wipers. It accused me of not parking correctly and signed by a male director (EL2). I got the feeling it was an angry note. I looked around to see if I was being watched and if he was there to abuse me. My stress levels are such that I knew that I could not take much more. Notes on windcreens are illegal. I hurriedly left the basement car park, quite frightened, Next day I sent him an email to let him know that what he had done was wrong and that he could have approached the matter differently. I felt frayed and constantly on edge all the time. I was getting frequent headaches from stress and not sleeping very well. I feel almost at wits end. Unbelievably, when asked for a coffee by the HR Manager, after she spoke about chooks for at least 25 minutes, she asked if I needed any help about the car park matter. The HR manager

stated she did not want anything to do with this matter. Apparently [redacted] had contacted HR because I had expressed concerns at his actions. I told HR that I had responded appropriately (being the senior HCO and knowing how to resolve these matters) – and that [redacted] had accepted my response. I later found out that the Manager HR had reported that she had counselled me, but this was not true or correct.

- I have been a Contact harassment Officer(CHO) in the department since 2005 and handled many cases successfully.

In March 2011 while I was working in the HR unit I came across a staff member when she was not herself and I noticed she was being moved around unnecessarily and had to sit alone.

In July 2011 this staff member, a staff member in HR sought my assistance as a Contact Harassment Officer and outlined her concerns about a number of matters where she felt she was being treated differently. In August, I started meeting with her to provide CHO support and it became clear that her matters occurred over a long period of time and were complex. This case was the most serious case I had come across and mostly concerned staff in HR and it became very challenging maintaining the relationship with HR over harassment issues in my role as CHO, and from the perspective of my management role. I found it difficult to discuss any issues with staff in HR and quickly realised I could not speak to them about obtaining support for myself or the staff member. As time went by, I also became concerned about the stresses on myself as CHO support officer, especially as HR had failed to provide ongoing training to staff in CHO roles.

I had already been marginalised by staff at senior management level, and now I sensed as I supported the staff member I was being marginalised by HR, as well. This was terribly awkward as all staff should have equal treatment in OHS matters but I found that staff in HR would not always speak to me or even say hello when I was walking with the staff member. I was shocked and began feeling even more uncomfortable as the matters were very sensitive and complex. I knew the staff member to be consistently solid in her work and professional and respectful at all times and felt very deeply concerned about her health and the additional stresses now upon myself.

Again in September I also dealt with another Contact harassment matter that was serious. This situation involved potentially physical abuse from a male staff member to a female staff member. So I called the Manager of HR to seek guidance and support. When the manager answered the phone and realised it was me – she said in a very strong aggressive voice “**What do you want?**” I instantly felt by the way she spoke I could not approach the HR team for any support for my role, and that this may have been due to the sensitivities of the staff member matter. It took all my strength then to speak with her about the other matter I was now dealing with. Finally the Manager HR and I met and talked about the other CHO matter and during that meeting I felt stressed and very careful not to mention anything that may upset her more. I was starting to feel discriminated against and marginalised as the staff member worked in HR and yet it was one of my responsibilities in this voluntary role to support all staff, not just staff outside of HR.

September/October 2011 – I now felt that the matters raised in HR were now impacting on me and my role as CHO. It seemed that everyone was super sensitive about bullying and harassment issues and wanted to ignore them. I realised I felt alone and that this was not going to change while supporting the staff member in my voluntary role, but I would not abandon her.

During a meeting and in email contact with acting CEO I sought support for myself (and for the staff member) but he did not respond with help or support, instead as he passed me in the corridor and while he acknowledged my colleague, he failed to acknowledge me at all. I felt invisible and worthless. I felt the acting CEO had abandoned me and did not provide any duty of care. I felt he understood from my email and our discussions that I was not supported and I waited to see if I was going to get any support. I believe that even if he spoke to HR about support – they were not contacting me to help. I felt ignored and helpless and at a loss to understand why I was not provided with any support. This is unprofessional and I feel negligent on their part. I was beginning to

wonder if they were ganging up on me because of my involvement in the staff matter. This case was emotionally and mentally draining and now I felt alone and unsupported too from the whole department. I did not know where to turn. I felt abandoned also and harassed and my nose bleeds were happening daily, I had headaches a lot, I could feel my blood pressure rising and felt stressed. I was starting to cry and be upset and felt that the department senior management was failing in its processes to support their staff. I did not want to come to work because of what was happening. November/December 2012 –I sought support for myself from The Commissioner (CEO) in November. He also did not respond with any support, guidance or empathy as we were both in a state of psychological distress. In fact he just said ‘that is your story’ and I never heard from him again, I waited to hear from him and maybe he would speak to HR and I would get some support from them. I felt abandoned by The CEO, the previous acting CEO and HR and could not understand the unprofessional behaviour by them. I believe they did not comply with due diligence and duty of care for which they had obligations under the Occupational Health & Safety Act. As well, they discriminated against me in the role of CHO. I feel absolutely abandoned by them. I am a senior director and I was ignored and felt the CEO deliberately refused support, guidance or any assistance - even to today I have not heard from the CEO about any support or his responsibility to duty of care , I felt, discriminated against, unsupported by The Commissioner, and HR’s non supportive actions. I realised during this conversation that I was absolutely alone and was not supported yet again. – I felt abused, bullied, isolated and marginalised. I felt that the poor culture in the department was systemic and I felt they deliberately denied duty of care and any support. I felt that Senior Executive Management had failed in its responsibility towards CHO’s and me personally in that I am now a victim of their failed understanding of the Workplace, Health and Safety Act.

January to March 2012 – I read the reports written by the external investigator that investigated the complaints lodged by the staff member. I was mentioned thru them; I realised how the corrupt HR team and Senior Executives had poorly managed this process and how it impacted my physical and emotional state and my role. I was NOT provided opportunity to respond to the investigators report. Knowing that the HR team had seen these reports and the senior executives and solicitors, the HR team sent these reports externally without any opportunity to respond. When the external investigator said - This could indicate that I may at best be validating the staff member’s belief that she is being bullied and harassed or at worst manipulating the staff member into making complaints. The HR team distributed to a number of senior staff in and external departments to the department had damaged my reputation and felt that people would have a preconceived opinion that I am a manipulator I felt embarrassed, isolated, humiliated and betrayed by HR and the Commissioner about the lack of governance in this process and the refusal of providing me with natural justice or due process by external investigator and the HR team – they read those reports and knew what was in them. I felt they were now mobbing me and I did not know how to handle their behaviour anymore with no support.

February/March 2012 –During this time, given the conflict between HR and the staff member, I was further marginalised by HR, went to Employee Assistance Program sessions and after outlining my situation was provided with advice to leave the department on all three visits. I do not have the strength or confidence to commence searching for another position outside of the department due to what was happening. I am at the end of my rope and feel I have nowhere to turn for help. In February I dressed and went to work. I got to park the car outside the department and burst into tears and feeling extremely nauseous – I could not walk in there and deal with all this and the thought of seeing some staff made me ill. I felt bullied, harassed and alone - I turned around and went home. March 2012 –a staff member at the department fell down the stairs at the department in March 2012. I called HR and spoke to a staff member to report the incident and let them know the staff member was attending the doctor and would not be in. The HR staff member stated that the incident had been reported and ridiculed me for raising concerns around the incident.

Recommendations

1. Remove staff complaint processes from HR teams as HR is often conflicted and corrupt.
2. Current external investigators are often not objective due to corrupt Terms of Reference'
3. Leaders in the workforce need to step up and take accountability for their staff and be clear on 'Bullying and Harassment has zero tolerance'. The leaders then need to act on their words.
4. Preventing Bullying and Harassment is about
 - a. Leadership
 - b. Education
 - c. Compliance
 - d. Sanctions – that need to be hard line including sacking