

Cover Letter Friday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2012.

The Committee Secretary

House of Representatives Standing Committee On Education and Employment  
Inquiry into Workplace bullying

Dear Secretary.

I am putting these submissions in because I hope that through this inquiry it will help to change the shame and stigma about the injuries sustained from workplace bullying behaviors and cultures. The company that I worked for 1988-2003 did not have a policy for workplace bullying/victimisation in their standards and conduct manual.

My submission is a personal account of my experience of Workplace Bullying, Harassment and Victimization and includes breaches of EEO and OHS Welfare.

### **In response to the Terms of Reference**

#### **the prevalence of workplace bullying in Australia and the Experience of victims of workplace bullying;**

Personal account and Impact of Bullying pages 1-3 see attached

#### **The role of workplace cultures in preventing and responding to bullying and the capacity for workplace based policies and procedures to influence the incidence and seriousness of workplace bullying**

Workplace Incidents and details of cumulative incident. Pages 1-19 see attached

#### **The adequacy of existing education and support services to prevent and respond to workplace bullying and whether there are further opportunities to raise awareness of workplace bullying such as community forums;**

Improving and Recognizing the true extent of Psychological /health Impact in legislation would give a better framework for many services to assist in this area and promote recovery.

Improving awareness to all stakeholders supports the social and humanitarian aspect to improving the dignity and human endeavors for all in the work place. And society.

#### **Whether the scope to improve coordination between government, regulators, health service Providers and other stake holders to address and prevent workplace bullying**

The existing information defining these experiences absolutely needs uniformity in terminology in all states and jurisdiction. The blanket statement of Reasonable management Practice should be clearly redefined as to what is Unreasonable Management Practice. As a major starting point.

I hope that the new harmonization laws will reflect policy base on the balance between Academic and more importantly the recommendation of practioners and specialist who work on the coalface of this problem. As this is where the biggest cost saving to government exists.

**Whether there are regulatory, administrative or cross-jurisdictional and international legal and policy gaps that should be addressed in the interest of enhancing protection against and providing an early response to workplace bullying, including through appropriate complaint mechanism.**

Establishing legal as an inclusive solution of recognition and remedy of injuries sustained in the workplace and without promoting further injury.

Group participant such as Self Insurer, medico/legal worksafe, workcover.etc

Need to be supported by a societal expectation of regular auditing and screening in maintaining the highest standard reflective of government health policy and employment legislation in all applicable areas

**Whether the existing regulatory frameworks provide a sufficient deterrent against workplace bullying**

The link between policy for workplace bullying, harrasment, workplace conduct, Breaches of contract, Breaches of OHS welfare and safe work, Employment Law.

Need to be more easily interlinked in a legal environment of remedy; being able to amalgamate over additional areas may act as a further deterrent to Employers.

**The most appropriate ways of ensuring bullying culture or behaviors are not transferred from one workplace to another.**

Unifying the definitions and sources of information and removing the stigma of the effects of bullying

**Possible improvements to the national evidence base on workplace bullying.**

A reporting data system from key player i.e. worksafe, workcover, GPs, lawyers that come into contact with this environment. Data that does not identify people or companies involved but records the existence of the event and outcomes?

Thank you for the opportunity to make this personal submission.

## **Submission: Inquiry in to Workplace bullying**

Response to the terms of reference

The prevalence of workplace bullying in Australia and the experience of victims of workplace bullying

This overview is a personal statement of impact and account of my own experience.

The foundation of my matter is in a Workplace injury as a result of Bullying, Harassment, Victimization and which included some breaches of OHS and EEO that involved Base Management and some crew related incidents from July 2001-April 2003(see attached)

I was originally based for 12 years in Sydney with the Long haul International Division 1988-2000. I transferred to Melbourne after a promotion in 2000. Where I held the position of Long haul onboard Customer Service Manager this role encompassed the management and welfare of all cabin crew onboard including in slip ports upline this including the provision and administration of all safety, service and performance standards onboard and aircraft operation related to this position after chain of command from Pilots. I had an excellent employment history and was at a significant point in my career development with the company and I held the following position.

2000-2003 Customer Service Manager (onboard) Diploma Airline Operation

First Class Cabin Crew

Flight Attendant Level 2

Cabin Supervisor Cert IV Airline Operation

First Class Air chef.

Flight Attendant Level 1

It is the environment and accumulation of a number of events over the last two years of my employment involving primarily Base Manager, Line Manager that I incurred a negative effect on my work environment and health. I found it extremely difficult to continue working under conditions of unwarranted isolation, totally unsupported in my position and void of a duty of care. I experienced various levels of bullying behaviors, alienation and victimization, due I believe to my legitimate and conscientious objection to the pattern of destructive and unsubstantiated feedback sessions that were not I believe conducted inline with policy in environments void of any positive/holistic ethos. Comments involving subjective character/style attacks, name calling/labeling

During my last 18 months in Melbourne. I work at times in an environment unlike anything that I had personally experienced in my previous 12 years in Sydney, I operated in situations that were to compound and become a serious compromise to my health and flying responsibilities in the position that I held.

At times the Base Management supported a vindictive culture of gossiping and hearsay, encouraging a devious/spying environment and an arena for cabin crew desperate to align them selves for the next promotion which BM and BM were directly involved. This made dealing with Melbourne base management very difficult as there was little focus on the effect of this on other crew and importantly customer service, this caused a break down in trust at many levels.

These conditions resulted in my leaving the company under extremely difficult circumstances. During which I was compelled into a situation to take redundancy, after a long period of sick leave. This was actioned whilst I was extended uncleared sick leave and leave. At the time I was under workplace

counseling 8 sessions Dates from # May 2003 through to #July 2003 through EAP (Employee assistance program). Regarding all my experiences in Melbourne

During this period I had no communication for 2+ months from the company whilst on multiple sick leave dates of all remaining flying duties from 16<sup>th</sup> April 2003 this including a sick leave certificate in May 2003 for 30 days (See crew notice and company policy.)

The welfare negligence over this time was unacceptable and a clear example of the direct and individually isolating treatment that I was experiencing. Particularly in light of the 2 meetings held. This act of negligence and lack of support by the company in failing to take action or notice about welfare issues in Melbourne had compounding effect on my situation.

1st meeting with the BM and LM in August 2002 to address the ongoing breakdown in relationship and situation regarding Line Manager

2nd meeting with BM and Union Rep in February 2003 this was held to discuss the deteriorating treatment in the workplace and the compromise to my position and myself.

This brought into question whom in the company gave authority for me to have 3 additional EAP sessions including one after my Sydney clearance interview. Which was an irregular procedure

As a consequence /impact of my experience I have incurred a debilitating and unacceptable injury of a stress breakdown, severe depression, PTSD and anxiety. Resulting in severe irreparable decline in my health in many areas associated with the extended duration and impact of the sequence of events that happened in the workplace that are unlike anything I have previously experienced and as a more serious consequence the inability to return to the relationship of employment.

Resulting in the loss of my home, substantial superannuation and assets on hardship grounds. And a reliance on DSP. The adverse and toxic work environment in addition to having profound damage to my physical and psychological health has had an overwhelming impact on my personal and financial situation, my employment, and personal and professional reputation, all which have been severely compromised. This has had a huge impact on my self-esteem as I was a confident, independent, self-sufficient and career orientated person prior to these events.

This experience and all that has followed has as such cost me life as I knew it, and changed me in every respect to my trust and relationship with employment, and a life very different and without the promise that it once held in my chosen and trained field of employment, which I personally worked very hard to achieve and was selected and trained in this position. I have as an individual always embraced aviation lifestyle as a long-term career and despite what external life circumstances might be occurring outside this unique work environment I had since leaving home age 16 to study and work and travel maintained complete independent financial and personal autonomy and considered work to be extremely important. I have as many people do, attended to various external stressors and life experiences responsibly and tried desperately to the best of my ability to resolve and improve my situation in Melbourne until I was forced into a completely untenable position with Base management without further serious compromise to my health and safety. The devastating impact of being subjected to bullying and harassing behavior from the Base Manager- down and sideways from the Line Manager and upward from a small group of crew.

I was continually demoralized by the unrelenting and unmonitored conditions that were imposed upon me through a prolonged pattern of incidents, (attached) and not aligned with perceived policy on management

practice which included continual and unwarranted comments on my character and personal demeanor /Style and work.

This was insidious and at times extremely covert in locations where due process did not occur, particularly with my LM. The effect over time was the more (noted individuals) undermined me in (performing my duties), sidelined, (for appropriate or positive feedback) and humiliated me (by labeling and name calling) the more alienated I felt and conforming and under pressure. I felt overwhelmingly to protect myself I had do every thing strictly by following exacting standards as dictated in various company literature (particularly with Safety and Standards)(not included) for which I was constantly berated for, Standards which were indicated to be high, but at times disregarded and varied by some.

The Melbourne base approach of handling of crew matters outside of company policy in many situations this lead to break down of appropriate management support and lead to inference by the BM and LM that my standards were too high which was contrary to training in Sydney and perceived management practice and company literature this particularly put an unreasonable and extensive pressure on myself and position to point of profound hypervigilance to survive.

I do not consider that there is any reasonable management practice in what I endured in my workplace 2001-2003 and It would be absolutely foreseeable to any reasonably minded and ethical person that subjecting any employee to this toxic environment and bullying behaviors that the management had intent to cause injury and damage by their action