

**SUBMISSION BY** **TO THE HOUSE OF**  
**REPRESENTATIVE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND**  
**EMPLOYMENT – INQUIRY INTO WORKPLACE BULLYING IN**  
**AUSTRALIA**

First of all, I would like to introduce myself. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am 62 years of age. In 1993 at the age of 43, I was diagnosed with Velo Cardio Facial syndrome, which is also known as Di George or 22q11.2 DS. I was diagnosed at the same time as our second son \_\_\_\_\_; at the time he was 5 years of age. We were to learn also, that our first son \_\_\_\_\_, who was born 26 years ago, died from the syndrome (aged 9 days old); due to complex heart problems. \_\_\_\_\_ is now 24 years of age and was born with two holes in the heart (now repaired) and he is also Intellectually Disabled. However, my problems are due to facial and also a cleft palate (although this has been repaired twice). Also in the late 1980's, I had subtle plastic surgery done so as to improve my appearance.

VCFS affects 1 in 2000 people and those with the syndrome may have one or all of the following: palate, heart or facial problems. In addition, there are another 180 + anomalies including mental issues, learning difficulties etc. More information about the syndrome can be found on [www.vcfsef.org](http://www.vcfsef.org). Also, the member for Boothby Dr Andrew Southcott MP recently did a speech about the syndrome, in the House of Representatives.

What has this got to do with workplace bullying? Due to my facial and speech problems I was constantly bullied in the workplace. In 1969 due to verbal abuse at the \_\_\_\_\_, I attempted suicide; prior to my attempt, I even went to my general practitioner and a plastic surgery specialist to see if something could be done to help improve my situation. However, they just stated there was nothing wrong. All my G.P. did was to give me a valium prescription, which of course was a bad mistake, as I eventually took an overdose of them.

While, my attempt on my life wasn't the best thing, at least the medical system seemed to react positively as a result. In 1972, I had my cleft palate repaired (initial operation) and this helped my speech to improve dramatically.

During the 1970's while working with the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, I was constantly verbally abused. This was done by management and staff of all levels. Even while working for the \_\_\_\_\_, I was also verbally abused because of the way I looked and spoke, although the abuse was mainly due to the way I look.

When I got retrenched from the Australian Public Service in 1990 and started to work in the private sector, I noticed that the bullying was even worse than that of the public sector. For instance, while working for the \_\_\_\_\_ I was abused by colleagues, however management seemed to be more tolerant.

In the late 1990's I had the worse verbal abuse since 1969. This was while I was working with \_\_\_\_\_ which is based at \_\_\_\_\_ Airport. I was verbally abused that much by my supervisor and management etc that I contemplated in committing suicide again. Even one of the management that abuse me is now CEO of the company (now known as \_\_\_\_\_). However, due to being married, I decided not too. Unfortunately, it was the culture of the place that seemed to encourage the abuse. After speaking to other colleagues at my level, I found out later, that they were also verbally abused for various reasons. It was terrible and I spent two years there.

However, I have noticed that during the past ten years, that there seems to be more tolerance in the workplace. This is probably mainly due to changing laws and people becoming more concerned of other colleagues etc. For example, I did contract work with the University of Adelaide, Department of Immigration and Citizenship and with the Australian Taxation Office. At all three organisations, I was accepted as part of the team and no one commented about my problems etc.

Finally, I recently wrote an Email to the Chair of the Committee, Amanda Rishworth MP in thanking the Government for implementing this inquiry. This is well overdue and I hope that the committee will be able to find a way to cure bullying in the Australian workplace. Today, I am now on a Disability Support Pension and my main role is as an advocate in promoting VCFS awareness in Australia and oveseas; in particularly writing to companies, schools, politicians, etc.

I thank the Committee for your time and support.