

My submission to the Federal Parliamentary Commission into Workplace Bullying

I am [REDACTED] of [REDACTED]

My postal address is:- [REDACTED]

I worked for 25 years, as a receptionist/clerk until I became Administration Supervisor & assistant to the manager.

Due to the impact of long term serious abuse, I suffered a mental collapse, serious anxiety/depression, my eidetic memory, drive, competence, ability, flair for foreign language, French, Spanish & Japanese, my thirst for knowledge and my entire wellness fell victim to my illness and I was subsequently diagnosed with left frontal lobe impairment with all associated devastation and eventually classified with a 30% impairment with no likely capacity of ever participating in gainful employment again.

Until retirement age I am receiving fortnightly payments and my clinical, psychological & pharmaceutical needs, associated with my injury, will be funded for the rest of my life. ** or until Workcover can find a reason to withdraw support.

My current medications are as follows:-

3 x 20mg Celebram (Citalopram) daily - without which my ability to function lapses & deep depression takes hold

1 x 25mg Seroquel (Quetiapine) daily - without which there is no sleep for me

I have obviously had various other ant- depression drugs since my breakdown, with varying and some dangerous complications. These include Avanza (Mirtazapine) which involved life threatening swelling & oedema.

Seroquel is also prescribed for bipolar disorder and there is more than enough evidence to consider my condition continues to deteriorate in spite of the nearly 15 years that have elapsed since I left the workplace.

My breakdown was complete and devastating. However, I had no idea that the abuse would continue through the Workcover experience. It is a truly terrifying and damaging process.

My entire family have suffered and my marriage ended but I have clawed back this important relationship.

We have lost an internationally recommended, exclusive Bed and Breakfast and lost our home, once valued at \$1.5m disposed of at auction for \$680. We got \$60 Because I have no capacity to operate even a coffee machine, forgetting even routine procedures with devastating 'mental blocks'

Moving on is scarcely an option as I can't take my first step without assistance of my medications. Life, as I knew it, as I loved it, no longer exists for me.

My History:

1. I was threatened with dismissal because I reported talk of arson being the reason for major fire.
2. I was threatened with dismissal & 'ruination' following discovery of & advice to senior official that intention to stand down staff as result of same fire was illegal
3. I was physically assaulted at a staff part by a senior, greatly respected member of the club and upon reporting the incident, I was advised that it was in the best interest of the club that I forget the incident. I was new to the organisation and had much to learn (I was told) and if I wanted to continue to have my prestigious job, I would wake up to myself and not regard myself as so untouchable.
4. I was constantly warned about my personal stance on staff welfare and incidences of staff abuse. Constantly reminded that my loyalties were with the people who signed my pay cheque.
5. Incidences of sexual misconduct were rife, with some members & guests believing that their membership fees gave them the right to offensive misconduct & sexual harassment.
6. I was required to counsel staff victims of sexual abuse & bullying, advising that the consequences of any action from them would be dismissal. That nobody would believe any accounts they might give & other staff would be warned against supporting victims. That taking a matter any further would be futile and would have dire consequences.
7. I was warned after making an official complaint to the manager about the cruel, abusive, humiliating and debasing behaviour that was constantly aimed at one young man whose position was of 'Houseman' I shall refer to as W, which meant he was a cleaner, repairman and fetch-it man. He was regarded as the 'general dog's body' and spent most of his day running from one department to another to with orders that made his job untenable and unworkable – then, department heads would report him to Manager and assistant manager and he would be reprimanded and was constantly on warnings. Unjustly, unfairly and inappropriately.
8. Another waitress was so traumatised by an assault from a guest staying at the club that I was again forced to counsel the victim and advise against making a fuss. I had to tell her that her assailant had already been counselled and had the full support of the committee (she, on the other hand would have no support) It was tough to do and each time I did it I felt dirtier and sicker with myself.
9. I was instructed by the manager to discourage a waitress from taking any further action after making an official complaint to the manager of inappropriate groping of her breast by a Committeeman. This time I refused, I was uncomfortable with this man being given another free ticket after his many years of inappropriate conduct.
10. I was the victim of sexual misconduct by a supervisor from another department and when I reported the assault to the manager I was told that no one would believe such a complaint against this " favourite son" so I might as well just get over it.
11. I was the constant target of the manager who would take any available opportunity to pin me in a corner to make inappropriate personal contact. He would follow me in to an annexe off his office, where all personnel records (for which I was responsible) were stored and he would squash me against the filing cabinet.

12. My desk at reception was in a u-shape and the manager would position himself beside me so as to be touching me with his hip, butt and thigh.
13. Several times he leant across in front of me with his crotch right in my face, lodging his foot behind the wheel of my chair so I couldn't move out of the way. It was humiliating and degrading to me.
14. I actually made an official request to all staff, protecting him, to allow me an arms length around me as personal space because of my asthma. I should never have shielded him – no matter what the cost would have been of reporting him.
15. During a conversation in his office about the ongoing and elevating cruelty being subjected to a staff member, I noticed that the manager was touching himself behind the desk. I said nothing until it became very clear what he was doing. He was masturbating. I told him he disgusted me. This statement was included in the damning report ultimately made against me.
16. I was so miserable and feeling so threatened as office administrator & assistant to the manager, that I requested to be transferred to another department, where there was no head at that time. Cleaning toilets, locker rooms, showers & making beds seemed so much healthier than the toxic atmosphere in the office. I was refused but permitted to assume the house supervisor in addition to my own duties and in extra hours. I was very satisfied to be away from the people who were making my life hell.
17. All staff in all departments were instructed to complete performance appraisals. I requested a meeting with the manager to discuss my own performance. I was told that no appraisal was necessary, that my work was, as usual, impeccable and that was that. Further requests to have this assessment formalised were refused.
18. I was receiving constant complaints about the quality of work coming out of my office. When I explained that I was unable to control the quality as I had been stopped from checking all communications before they were sent out over my signature. The manager told me that was my problem.
19. Official complaints had come from the club committee about poor work from 2 of my subordinates. I arranged a meeting with all my staff, in the presence of the manager, advising of the complaints and suggesting areas where WE ALL could improve. I always used the Royal WE as my leadership style. The 2 culprits, predictably, tried to reassign blame and at the conclusion of the meeting stayed in with the manager who we overheard telling them not to worry about her, they were doing just fine and he didn't have any complaints. I immediately returned and spoke privately to him about what we had heard. His response "well that's your problem [REDACTED]"
20. The manager was deliberately undermining my authority with my subordinates and I was being deliberately excluded from areas of operation that were part of my responsibility. There were lots of whispering and giggling. I thought I was too strong to be troubled by such childish misconduct.
21. I found myself being excluded from monthly department head meetings. Not being advised that they were rescheduled to my days off. When I discovered this & questioned the manager, I was informed that I had not made myself available for these meeting and it had been officially noted.
22. One of my duties was wages, staff relations & a strong knowledge of the awards relevant to the various departments. I noted that one of the casual waitresses was falsifying her record

of hours by increasing finish times. I knew this because I had been working back on the nights that she had been on duty. I alerted the manager who told me not to say anything and simply not to pay her the extra time she claimed. An argument ensued between the waitress & myself, which the manager steadfastly refused to come to my assistance. I did feel it necessary to explain to her why her hours had been adjusted but she insisted on her rights. The manager's instructions were still not to pay her the extra. Eventually he agreed to speak with her and instructed me immediately to pay her and, in her presence, I was reprimanded for not paying her and for dragging the matter out so long without consulting him. It was humiliating and demeaning, she immediately broadcast the story to everyone.

23. The young houseman I was constantly having to defend and protect from the cruelty of management and the general staff was working in his own time (saving the club money) tending the clubhouse gardens. I asked the manager if it would be possible to make enquiries with Swinburne Tech about a gardening/landscaping apprenticeship for the lad. He agreed with the idea and that I could tell the employee (who was elated, it was the first time anyone has actually respected and acknowledged his dedication and good work. He was like a new person with renewed vigour and even more enthusiasm about his work. When the paperwork arrived, I completed it and took it to the manager for a final look. His response. "Did you really believe I was serious about this, do you really think I would waste money on that 'retard'" None of my protestations made any difference, he told me I could have the pleasure of advising the lad. I was devastated but nothing compared to the devastation of the boy. I did not apprise him of the real details of the conversation with the manager, simply told him that there was nothing appropriate available for him at that time. A white lie, but I couldn't hurt him any more with the awful truth. It was a critical blow to W and one he was not to recover from.
24. W would always be cleaning in front of reception (according to his schedule) when the mgr arrived for work. He would always greet the mgr politely and was always deliberately ignored. One morning, as I watched, W didn't notice the mgr as he strode by. He spun around and proceeded to abuse W for ignoring him, telling him he was lucky to have a job and that he was on a very slippery slope and if he ever ignored the mgr again he would be out of the place. W just stood there dumbfounded.
25. Part of W's duties was to clean out and set all open fireplaces in the building, including one on the associates' lockerroom. He was forced to start half an hour early on Tuesdays & Thursdays because the women said he made them feel uneasy. It was a disgusting complaint and he was very hurt.
26. From time to time money or property would go missing from the associates' locker room and they decided it must be W. He was accused and I was forced to defend him because I knew him to be honest to a fault. It was humiliating for him and degrading and the women would opening snigger & whisper when he was in earshot. Terribly cruel.
27. W (the same young man) had a car and he had lost his licence. A chef in the kitchen told W that he wanted to buy his car for a pittance and that if he didn't deliver it to work the next day he would get his Judo champion brother to beat him to death. W told me this after a staff member had alerted me that he was hanging around the back of the building when he was supposed to be off at lunch. W told me he was terrified because the brother was going to kill him, he was generally in fear for his life so he was hiding. I reported immediately to the manager who was uninterested and told me it had nothing to do with work. I took time off

to take W home and explained to his mother what had happened. She confided that he was increasingly disturbed by the cruelty dealt him at work and I promised her I would do my best to make things better.

28. I had also noted that W was working at least 1 ½ hours overtime each day & when I questioned why he was not claiming, he dismissed the matter, telling me not to worry. I was authorised to amend his record to reflect all the many hours of overtime I knew he had worked. The manager became enraged when I told him what I had done. Telling me that an “arrangement” had been put in place by he and the head chef in which W was to work a minimum of 1 ½ hours overtime at the end of every shift. I told the manager that nowhere in the relevant award was provision for such conduct and that it was entirely inappropriate and illegal. W was paid the overtime but never allowed to work over again. Though he never left for up to an hour after his finishing time.
29. W was eventually sacked for using a vile term in front of women in the kitchen. This happened on a day I was off and the manager and ass manager physically marched him from the premises after sacking him on the spot. I was to discover that he had been on his last warning and shown the fictitious file they had created for him. Remember, all personnel files, including management were my responsibility. W had used a 4 letter word and so scandalised a female chef that she had immediately reported him to the new head chef (her husband) who immediately went to manager & ass manager, who immediately found W and marched him into the office – all 3 of them. I was told about this by W’s department head, who was angry & upset at his dismissal & his treatment. It is appropriate to advise that the female chef well known to be one of the most foul mouthed young lady every to have worked there. W was set up.
30. Yes, W was set up. I had been having ongoing talks with the manager over W’s right (after 9 years of loyal service) to be offered the new overnight security officer position that was to be created, with the houseman position being eliminated. There was no legitimate reason to terminate W and he deserved the position. To say that management did everything in its power to force him to leave would be an understatement. AND to say that his termination was carefully planned would also be an understatement. I discussed launching an unfair dismissal action on W’s with his supervisor but we both, sadly agreed that he was safer out of the place. Very tragic.
31. W was traumatised by his unfair dismissal and withdrew from everyone. I again promised his mother, who he was nursing with cancer because she made him promise he would never send her to hospital. He was determined to honour her wishes in a most courageous and decent way.
32. Over the next few years W continued to obsess over the deliberate cruelty he had suffered at that workplace by those individuals to clear the way for the new system. He was in and out of care and sent to Melbourne to work on reduced wages on some govt welfare scheme. He was very depressed, morose I believe and he took his life and was not discovered for some days. My long fight against cruel psychological, emotional, sexual & physical abuse in the workplace will always be partly because of and on behalf of W.
33. W became the second former employee who had been the target of this toxic workplace to commit suicide.
34. My own position in the organisation was becoming untenable. I found the ass manager doing a task I had always done (I was privately pleased to offload this chore) but some days later

the manager asked if I was not coping with my workload. When I explained the situation with the ass manager, I was firmly reminded that I took my orders from and was responsibly only to the manager – not the ass manager. The manager chided that I was earning more than the ass manager anyway. The next time the ass mgr was doing one of my regular tasks I asked him what was happening & was told that he would be doing that job from then on. When I went to the mgrs. Office, the ass mgr was right behind me & closed the door behind s. Mgr asked me what the problem was & I explained. He asked me if I had a problem with authority and why I was questioning the ass mgr. I was astonished at being told that my problem with authority and taking instruction would be noted.

35. There was a personal relationship going on between the ass mgr and one of my subordinates. The situation made the atmosphere in the office very difficult and this woman became untouchable and above any discipline I was supposed to enforce.
36. At that time the then president of the club was also having a relationship with another of my 'girls' and the atmosphere and hostility in the office was becoming unbearable.
37. My position of admin supervisor was constantly being mocked by certain members bypassing me and dealing directly with my subordinates. I was told by the mgr that it was creating a big problem for me and I had to fix it.
38. After threatening to make a formal complaint of harassment, the 2 year wait for a meeting with the committee was finally granted to re-determine my employment conditions and duties and to sort out the complaints of improper conduct & sexual misconduct. I left the meeting on my first official warning. I was staggered that this could happen and it was obvious that this action was carefully planned and orchestrated.
39. I was accused of clearly having a grudge against the manager and that my conduct was so deplorable that they (the ad hoc committee convened to deal with my complaints) were tempted to bypass normal practice & dismiss me on the spot. A lawyer on the committee told me that they were unconcerned about any unfair dismissal claim I might consider because "you can't beat us, yes you'll bring in witnesses and we'll bring in witnesses but you can't win, who do you think is going to stand behind you, you don't have a hope".
40. Life became intolerable for me after that, I had not realised that I was ill, I had no idea that I was having constant panic attacks – I didn't know what they were. I hadn't slept properly for years, I was hyper- vigilant, always waiting for the next thing to go wrong.
41. My 2nd meeting with the committee concurred that I was impeccably loyal, that I was a perfectionist but I must 'relax' and not be so fussy. "You should see some of the rubbish that goes out of our office" (the head of a renowned radiology group) and the lawyer eagerly agreed "same at work" I was told to chill out and not take things so seriously. I was also told that they were very sorry to hear that my husband and I had separated (no person had this information, it was private and had no relevance to my work – it was rather because of the trauma I was suffering at work, the endless hours & bringing work home - that caused the problems with my husband and I) I was astounded that they had managed to get this information and obviously regarded me as weakened emotionally. I was told that they would closely watch me and we would meet again in a month. **I WAS SUDDENLY ON MY SECOND WARNING!!**
42. The situation was intolerable, with the manager constantly telling me that one word from him and I was history. That my entire life was in his hands. He would constantly repeat that the committee did not want me at the club. That he did not want he at the club. That he

hated seeing me walk thru the door every day and wished I would just go away. "Why don't you just die" He defaced a scout association badge I kept from the Ballarat Jamboree (I had been a Scouting Commissioner in Geelong) The badge read [REDACTED], he inscribed so deeply that it couldn't be erased "DiED" I was becoming very unwell and this was devastating to me. To suggest I should just die was one thing, to deface my badge to reflect this was very distressing to me.

43. With the support of the committee behind him [REDACTED] was out of control. Each day he would remind me that:- one word from him and I would be out, or mouthing it to me so no one could hear.
44. I felt myself becoming unhinged.
45. The third meeting was scheduled and it was a living nightmare. A document was presented to the president, from the mgr, a damning chronicle of misconduct that, if I hadn't been so distraught, would have been laughable.
 - A. I was accused of calling the mgr an idiot. But no explanation that it had been in the context of a blemish on his face I feared was melanoma & after nagging him for a year I had indeed called him an idiot if he didn't have it seen to. It turned out to be a very serious melanoma. My head was spinning – how could he change the circumstances to make me look so bad. I was feeling dizzy and ill.
 - B. I was accused of telling the mgr that he disgusted me. Yes, I had but he didn't describe the context of the remark made when I caught him masturbating in front of me.
 - C. Other absurd and ridiculous complaints were eagerly seized upon by the committee and at one point the lawyer person became so agitated and irate and again suggested I should be sacked on the spot. That he felt like insisting the president do so immediately.
 - D. I was so shocked and afraid that I could not defend myself against the allegations or give explanation of how they misrepresented the circumstances in which they were said. I felt faint and concerned that I might pass out in front of them, which I couldn't bear.

42a I was scarcely able to function and the manager was behind me at every step, the foul language I had reported him for was increasing and he would simply look at me and say – who you gonna tell?? Nobody cares [REDACTED], we just wish you would [REDACTED] off out of hear.

Also, after that last meeting the committee people involved refused to speak or acknowledge me and this conduct filtered through to all committee members and obviously members were concerned by the treatment they witness but were given no explanation. A

46. As major alterations were underway at the club, dust & chemicals released played havoc with my asthma and it was necessary for me to go to the home of my mother, who lived nearby to use my asthma pump. I would more than make up for the time away but I was told my absences were now being noted.
47. As an asthmatic, I was seriously affected each time the clubhouse was painted and I was allowed to work from home for the worst days of the gassing of the paint. This time I was told that I would be sent down to the grounds facility and work in the office of the superintendent. I felt sick, I told mgr that, under the circumstances his instructions were out of order and inappropriate as tis was the man who tried to sexually assault me. I was told that I didn't have a choice. Do it or leave

48. Because of the dust & fumes I insisted that my staff be allowed to leave the building every hour or so to get some fresh air. That was OK but I was told that I was not included in the arrangement.
49. Everyday brought a new fear, more offensive behaviour as the mgr regarded himself as untouchable with the full backing of his perverse committee.
50. I was told, out of the blue, that I was not to use the club copier, or computers to make or receive personal phone calls or for personal use. I agreed to the new arrangement and asked if it covered all staff. I was abruptly told it was only about me. Only me.
51. A day or so later I was instructed to make 100 copies of a birthday invitation for a kitchen staff member. When I suggested one of my girls would do it, the mgr loudly told me that I was to do it and do it "now".
52. I was constantly being humiliated in such ways in front of my subordinates and the office was increasing in hostility as my subordinates postured for the right to take over my position, which was becoming obviously tenuous.
53. With one of the year's biggest week long competition coming up we were working feverishly to get everything done well before the event. I had given an important task to one of the employees I trusted and together we had managed to finish everything well before time and it was a very pleasing and satisfying time for us. At about ten pm I phoned one of the associate members to tell her that all her work was completed and ready for proofing (3 days early) and she was very angry that I was working at that hour and told me to go home to my family. I felt that I could.
54. The next morning the manager ignored me as I entered the building & I had a feeling that all was not well. He called me into his office & closed the door. He said he'd had enough of me and that he was standing me down, with pay, until he could brief the committee and decide what to do about me. I was unceremoniously escorted from the building, not even allowed to collect my personal items from my desk. To this day they have never been returned to me.
55. The next week I was contacted at my home by colleague from my office, frantic that none of the work for the coming major event had been done and accusing me of not doing the work and hiding the drafts. I was staggered that all my work & that of the trusted worker I was mentoring, previously mentioned had gone missing & I was being accused of sabotage. They were not aware that my ally knew we had completed all the work before due date. They were relying on me alone being involved.
56. A meeting was called with the committee & I was summoned to attend. It was an humiliating and disturbing experience. It was a freezing winter night and my husband was waiting in the cold car for the hour they made us wait to meet and the subsequent meeting. I was accused of lying about doing work and continued, unacceptable rudeness to the mgr. As if I would be so stupid under such scrutiny & being on my last warning.
57. I had been working long hours under stress and I was collapsing under the pressure.
58. After being escorted off the property I went immediately to my doctor for something to calm my splitting headache, headaches were constant but I thought my head was about to explode. My GP was not in & the stand in GP advised me to return early next day to consult with my GP.
59. MY GP immediately diagnosed severe anxiety & depression and advised me never to return to that workplace.

60. As a member of the club I asked if my GP wished to refer me to another GP due to possible conflict of interest. He displayed mock surprise & offense, advising me that I was his long time patient & my needs were paramount.
61. GP further advised me NOT to go down the workcover road "you'll never survive it" rather that I should simply resign & take my entitlements away from what he admitted was a toxic workplace.
62. He was unhappy about signing my workcover application forms and told me that no one ever succeeds in a psychological injury. He tried hard to dissuade me from taking that action.
63. My condition was worsening and I was suicidal, my claim was investigated and accepted, however, my GP told me on a Monday morning, following a weekend when I was regarded as 'at risk' that he had long discussions with the president of the club and had to recommend my immediate return to work. He told me that if I did not report to work within one hour of my due to start time, I could be sacked on the spot AND that Workcover would also 'drop me like a hot cake'
64. He further advised me that to seek another opinion was not allowed as Workcover regarded it as 'doctor shopping' & would immediately drop my case.
65. I was not going to return to work. I had seen for myself how they treated 'return to work after injury' cases. I would rather have died.
66. In desperation I contacted the insurance investigator who examined my case & had told me it was the worst case of long term abuse he had ever encountered AND that his interview with my former employer concurred with most of what I had alleged. He labelled the mgr "an idiot" He told me that he had been discussing my case with my HRH caseworker & together they were astonished at the treatment I had suffered AND that I must contact her for the name of another doctor. When I protested that this was not allowed and who had told me this, he was disgusted and said "they've really got to him, this has all been worked out" He told me that I had a right to go to 100 GPs until I found one who would treat me appropriately.
67. It has been a ravaging experience, just coping with the workcover experience, the assessments, re-assessments, reports & more reports. Under FOI, I was able to get hold of my complete case file. I had been cautioned against such action, I was advised that the person I would read about in the reports from my employer would be someone I wouldn't even know, couldn't even imagine. I soldiered on and it was true, they painted me as a monster.
68. After 25 years of loyal and dedicated service, a trusted and valued employee. My reputation was trashed and staff were warned against speaking of or to me. Officially warned.
69. Members were not told why I had suddenly gone and those who made special effort to confront the committee.
70. I received a letter from the president ordering me not to discuss my situation with anyone and to make no contact with staff or members, even those who were my personal friends.
71. After my own breakdown and subsequent escape to the safety of my home, drapes drawn, gates locked, the waitress who had been assaulted rang me to tell me that she had been sacked on the basis that she was not the type of person they wanted at the club. When she mentioned her abuse claim, the mgr told her that it had been sorted and she would not have an hope in Hell of taking it anywhere.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

72. She was devastated, absolutely distraught, I couldn't help her, my name was already mud & I was struggling to survive myself. I just couldn't help her. She took her own life & I can never relieve myself of the belief that if I had the strength to help her, there might have been another outcome. Her little boys have no idea of the agony she suffered in our workplace and how much it might have contributed to her desire to end her suffering, end her life

73.

There is more, much, much more to my story and I fear that it might not make the difference I have worked so long to achieve on behalf of all workers and in particular on behalf of the young man and the young mother who took their lives after being overwhelmed by the cruel abuse and sexual misconduct that they were made to believe they had brought upon themselves.

I believe I have survived for a reason and I will continue to fight against cruel psychological, emotional, sexual & physical abuse in the workplaces and until all workplaces become healthy and productive places for employers and employees alike.

I would be most happy to appear at a public hearing.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

10 pages herewith