

CHAPTER FIVE

WHISTLEBLOWING: THE HUMAN DIMENSIONS

5.1 In this chapter the Committee describes from the whistleblowers perspective the human dimensions of whistleblowing. Evidence, both formally received by the Committee and anecdotal, has been utilised to portray the people who become whistleblowers, describe their motivation and seek to understand the personal effects they suffer from the act of whistleblowing.¹

5.2 In providing this perspective, the Committee acknowledges the evidence of so many witnesses which bears testimony to comments by Dr Simon Longstaff of the St James Ethics Centre.

In discussing the issue of whistleblowing, there is a tendency to lose sight of the fact that our deliberations have a direct bearing on the welfare of individual human beings and, through them, on society at large. It is somewhat paradoxical that in developing systems and procedures that protect whistleblowers one can be seduced by the intellectual challenges of developing technique to such an extent that the human scale of the problem is lost from sight.²

The Committee wholeheartedly endorses these sentiments.

5.3 The Committee believes that people who have not been exposed to the human dimension of whistleblowing are often sceptical of the motives of whistleblowers and are unaware of the impact upon the lives of those who have taken

1 The scope of the case histories received by the Committee can be seen from the resumes of whistleblowers' experiences provided by the Queensland Whistleblower Study and Whistleblower Action Group - QWS evidence pp.1012-1016 and WAG evidence pp.1073-1084. For other whistleblowers' personal experiences recounted in evidence see Len Wylde and Jack King, pp.413-421; Ken Smylie, pp.431-432; Christina Schwerin and colleagues, pp.490-508; Alwyn Johnson, pp.525-556; Bill Toomer and Keith Potter, pp.558-588; Dr Kim Sawyer, pp.627-640; Shirley Phillips, pp.648-657; Dr Jean Lennane, David Roper, Kim Cook, Vince Neary and Alan Barry, pp.711-719; Greg McMahon, Tom Hardin, Peter Jesser, Robert Osmak, Robin Rothe, Denis Grove and Gordon Harris, pp.1106-1123; Kevin Lindeberg and Des O'Neill, evidence pp.1132-1144; Bill Wodrow, pp.1372-1384. These cases and many others are detailed in the submissions received by the Committee.

2 Dr Simon Longstaff (St James Ethics Centre), Submission no. 118, p.2.

this drastic step. Indeed, the members of the Committee developed a greater understanding and appreciation of the personal issues involved with whistleblowing as the inquiry progressed.

Whistleblower support groups

5.4 An academic study of approximately 100 whistleblowers and their cases, known as the Queensland Whistleblower Study (QWS),³ has been undertaken by the Department of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Queensland. This study investigated the personal and organisational impacts of public sector whistleblowing in Queensland since 1990. It has created a valuable data base on whistleblowers and their personal experiences. By bringing together a large number of whistleblowers, the Queensland Whistleblower Study provided the genesis of the Queensland Whistleblowers Action Group.

5.5 Whistleblower support groups are growing in each State. These groups operate with voluntary assistance and are staffed by dedicated individuals. Whistleblowers Australia⁴ which operates on a national level with branches in a number of States and the Whistleblowers Action Group (WAG)⁵ which operates as an autonomous group in Queensland, are the major support groups for whistleblowers. Not only do these groups provide support, counselling and general assistance, but they have also developed a capacity to lobby on whistleblowing in the abstract and on behalf of individual members in particular. WAG is also assisted by the Queensland Justices and Community Legal Officers' Association through the provision of legal and financial support. It is primarily from the evidence of these groups, their members and other whistleblowers that the Committee has based its comments on the personal experiences described in this chapter.

3 Queensland Whistleblower Study, evidence p.1011.

4 Whistleblowers Australia, evidence p.699.

5 Whistleblowers Action Group, evidence pp.1093, 1100 and 1129.

Who becomes a whistleblower

5.6 Recognition of whistleblowers and the role of whistleblowing has grown significantly in recent years. As discussed in Chapter 4 the importance of whistleblowers to the Fitzgerald Royal Commission, references to the subject in parliamentary and other government reports and the move towards legislative protection by a number of States and territories are indicative of the growing awareness and acknowledgment of the practice and influence of whistleblowing.

5.7 Evidence given to the Committee has suggested that this is reflective of a demise within the political and public administration environment in Australia. Witnesses have constantly referred to a diminution of the traditional values of ethics, honesty and professional integrity at all levels of society. A culture of self interest and reduced responsibility has overtaken that of public duty and the greater national interest. It is within this environment that the practice of whistleblowing has steadily grown.

5.8 The Committee received submissions and heard evidence from many whistleblowers during the course of its inquiry. They came from the Commonwealth and State public sectors; local government institutions and instrumentalities; police, banking, legal and health care professions and academic institutions. Geographically, whistleblowers were not restricted to particular States. Submissions were received from all States indicating that whistleblowing is an activity undertaken on a nationwide basis.

5.9 Members of the Committee had not previously realised that the occurrence of whistleblowing was so widespread and involved such diverse areas of public and private sector employment. The people who become whistleblowers cover a wide cross-section of society. They have diverse socio-economic backgrounds and a range of educational qualifications. Yet within this diversity there was a commonality in the type of person who becomes a whistleblower.

5.10 Whistleblowers are generally noted for their intrinsic honesty and integrity. The Queensland Whistleblower Study has reported that the whistleblowers in its study are mostly model employees. They are described by QWS as extremely conscientious and, before deciding to blow the whistle, regarded as highly valued employees by their organisation. They are invariably educated, experienced, efficient, hardworking, honest and perceptive of how their organisation functions. They have been socialised through their family and through the education system to believe in the institutions of the Westminster system, such as Parliament and bureaucratic accountability. They believe in the system's safeguards - principally the law and the administrative procedures and authorities established for the purpose of protecting 'the system'. They expect that such authorities will undertake their duties in an honest and ethical manner. QWS indicates that it is, therefore, with a feeling of great faith and certainty that they approach these authorities when they see some form of wrongdoing with an expectation that the authority will deal with the matter in an honest and ethical manner. The action, or in many cases lack of action, subsequently taken by the authority is often regarded by the whistleblower as inadequate, inappropriate or unsatisfactory. The whistleblower finds it difficult to believe and accept this reaction to their disclosure, resulting in significant levels of disaffection with the bureaucratic structures and loss of faith in 'the system' generally.⁶

5.11 Not all people become whistleblowers by making a deliberate decision to blow the whistle, usually after considerable soul searching and possibly even taking legal advice. In some instances people may become whistleblowers almost by accident. A person who is in the wrong place at the right time may inadvertently become a whistleblower after seeing a wrongdoing and simply commenting upon it within their working environment. Pressures brought to bear may compel such a person to make a moral choice - to either conform by accepting the wrongdoing, or dissent and blow the whistle.

6 Dr William de Maria and Cyrelle Jan (QWS), evidence pp.1037, 1040.

5.12 Other witnesses suggested that the problem with whistleblowing is that they did not realise they were involved until it was too late. Events often 'snowball' so that they are not aware that they have become a whistleblower until they suffer a detriment by the organisation. Until that time they believe they have just been doing their job. This attitude was expressed by many whistleblowers who regarded themselves as ordinary people simply doing their job.⁷

5.13 Whistleblowers frequently display a humble and modest attitude. By contrast a researcher with the QWS asserted that:

whistleblowers are a valuable workplace resource. They are the ones who are endeavouring to keep the workplace honest, to keep it efficient and effective. These people are vital and necessary. They are national treasures and should be revered as such. They should not only be protected but nurtured, encouraged and rewarded. They are the perfectionists in a 'she'll be right' society.⁸

Motivation and considerations in becoming a whistleblower

5.14 Although some people may become whistleblowers almost by accident, for most the decision to blow the whistle is taken deliberately. In evidence before the Committee, whistleblowers were described as honest and possessing a great sense of integrity. The Committee accepts that in the majority of cases a whistleblower is motivated by a high altruistic concern for the public good.

5.15 However, the Committee recognises that whistleblowers may not always be motivated by noble intentions. Whistleblowers may also be motivated by personal benefit, malice or ill-will. The Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration Report on the Management and Operations of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, referred to in Chapter 4, commented upon this aspect in relation to the actions taken by whistleblowers in DFAT. The F&PA Committee

7 Dr Kim Sawyer, evidence p.638 and Tom Hardin (WAG), evidence p.1111.

8 Cyrelle Jan (QWS), evidence, p.1038.

concluded that the actions were "improper, reckless and likely to have damaged the reputations of innocent individuals and to have been contrary to the public interest".⁹

5.16 It is sometimes not possible to differentiate disclosures driven by altruism from those based upon lesser motives. Disclosures made in good faith and with the best of intentions may be based on little more than supposition or innuendo resulting in adverse effects upon other people and property. Similarly, sincere and well-intentioned whistleblowers may assert things that are subsequently proven to be incorrect. Genuine mistakes can be made.

5.17 An issue which may arise when considering a malicious disclosure as distinct from the frivolous, vexatious or misconceived is that it is quite feasible that a factual disclosure could be made with malicious intent.¹⁰ Irrespective of the motivation such disclosure would still warrant investigation. The impact of motivation and the accuracy of the disclosure in relation to protection for the subjects of whistleblowing is discussed further at paragraph 9.37.

5.18 In determining whether to blow the whistle consideration needs to be given to the personal privacy and professional reputation of those against whom allegations are made. Richard G. Fox has recently written that legislation, such as that being developed by the States as referred to in Chapter 4, defines the categories of disclosure which are to be encouraged under statutory protection in order to reduce the need for potential whistleblowers to make personal moral judgements about when a matter is sufficiently grave to warrant risking the reputation and morale of those about whom the complaint is made.¹¹

5.19 A further consideration in determining whether to blow the whistle relates to the well documented suffering and indignity that whistleblowers are subjected to as

9 F&PA DFAT Report, op.cit., p.42.

10 Dr Jean Lennane, evidence p.707.

11 Richard G. Fox, *Protecting the Whistleblower*, *Adelaide Law Review*, v.5 n.2 1993, p.145.

a result of their action (described later in this chapter). This raises the question why anyone would report wrongdoing at all knowing that the likely outcome will be harassment and victimisation.

5.20 The responses from witnesses to this dilemma were varied. Most indicated that the cause was of such importance that exposing the problem was paramount. A few indicated that they were unaware that their action could possibly have led to a chain of events ultimately having such personal impact. Rarely was it suggested that they should not have undertaken the action.

5.21 The Queensland Whistleblower Study referred to the paradox of whistleblowing. On the one hand whistleblowing is not worthwhile due to the overwhelming personal costs outweighing the partial benefits. On the other hand, a high percentage of whistleblowers, knowing now what happened on a personal level when they blew the whistle, say that they would do it again. The QWS explained:

Some respondents considered that the costs outweighed the benefits, and therefore they would not do it again. Others thought that corruption and wrongdoing were so entrenched in their organisations that future disclosures would be futile. Nevertheless many reported that they would do it again, notwithstanding the enormous personal and professional cost. Comments like "I could not live with myself [if I saw wrongdoing and did not report it]", are characteristic of these respondents. In effect, their view is that the moral imperative to disclose wrongdoing outweighs the fact that the costs of disclosure outweigh the (tangible) benefits.¹²

5.22 Many people begin their involvement with whistleblowing by using internal mechanisms provided by their organisation to receive or investigate complaints about wrongdoing. These people get fully involved in whistleblowing when they become frustrated and exasperated at the inaction and ineffectiveness of these internal mechanisms. They then turn to alternative, usually external, sources such as the media to voice their complaints. Whistleblowing to the media is discussed in Chapter 9.

5.23 This process, which has been described by many whistleblowers as typical of their introduction to whistleblowing, does not imply universal condemnation of the effectiveness of internal mechanisms. Dr William de Maria has noted that some of the QWS respondents expressed satisfaction with the internal mechanisms they used.¹³

5.24 In most cases people do not regard themselves as whistleblowers when making the initial report to their internal mechanisms. At that time they regard themselves as just fulfilling an ethical obligation to the organisation or a legislative duty to report wrongdoing. They are simply doing their job. It is when the system does not respond and repercussions and harassment begin that they become a whistleblower.

5.25 One witness described this approach in terms of the only thing a whistleblower ever wants is an inquiry. They only want people to examine the facts and give them an honest assessment. They then want to get on with the job they have been performing.¹⁴

5.26 The outcome of the action taken by organisations in response to the whistleblower's disclosure of wrongdoing has been summarised by the Queensland Whistleblower Study. It indicated that whilst many whistleblowers believed that little or no response was made to their disclosure, others claimed that their action had at least some positive impact, even if it was only an equivocal or relative impact. Thus, despite the generally perceived negativity with which organisations respond to public interest disclosures some whistleblowers were able to find relatively positive organisational outcomes to their disclosure.¹⁵

13 Dr William de Maria (QWS), evidence p.1060. It was a small group of 10-15% of the QWS respondents who expressed satisfaction with the internal reporting mechanisms they had used.

14 Dr Kim Sawyer, evidence p.639.

15 Queensland Whistleblower Study, evidence p.1019.

5.27 A possible motivation which has been discussed in relation to whistleblowing schemes concerns financial reward. Australian whistleblowers do not expect financial reward, unlike the system which operates in the United States. Indeed, it was argued by many before the Committee that such a system was opposed to the very reason why they decided to become whistleblowers which was to take action after being ethically disturbed by the wrongdoing they had seen. Financial reward has been seen as a dangerous inducement upon which to expect people of goodwill to report wrongdoing. This aspect is discussed further in Chapter 11.

Personal effects suffered by whistleblowers

5.28 The overall effect upon a whistleblower at a personal level can be devastating. Case histories presented by Whistleblowers Australia, the Whistleblowers Action Group and Queensland Whistleblower Study indicate that the experiences of whistleblowers conform to a pattern. This pattern was borne out by the evidence of witnesses before the Committee who described the impact of whistleblowing on their personal situations.

5.29 The overall personal cost to the whistleblower is enormous - it can include loss of job, loss of career and employment prospects, financial loss, damage to personal and professional reputation, protracted legal processes and damage to personal life, including loss of spouse or partner, family and friends and health. The traumatic effects of the process often extends from the whistleblower to his or her immediate family, relatives and friends.

Organisational response to the whistleblower

5.30 The Committee received considerable evidence referring to the organisational response to whistleblowers. The corruption within an organisation was described by one witness as "a cancer". He wrote:

The whistleblower identifies the cancer, attempts to remove it, and then is attacked by it. The attack usually takes the form of harassment of varying degrees of intensity.¹⁶

Although the mode of attack may differ, many experiences of whistleblowers are disturbingly similar.

5.31 Whistleblowers Australia describes a process whereby as soon as a disclosure is made a pattern of behaviour emerges which usually leads to a predictable outcome. The whistleblower is discredited, their personal life and career is ruined and they are emotionally and psychologically damaged. The behavioural response of an organisation to the disclosure is seen as having two phases. First, an intense stress factor is exerted on the whistleblower which eventually results in a breakdown of his or her health. Secondly, victimisation and harassment occurs within the workplace. The whistleblower is set up, given menial duties to perform, ostracised, maligned and defamed. Distorted accounts of work practices are submitted. Personal files damaging to the whistleblower are built up with contrived evidence.¹⁷

5.32 It has been noted that this organisational response can occur over a period of several years and generate circumstances which overtake the initial disclosure as grounds for the organisations actions.¹⁸ Gordon Harris, Secretary of WAG, described the experience of whistleblowing as a matter

... of pure survival leaving the messenger often open to ridicule, contrived charges or plain reprisal from more powerful forces in "the system". The message becomes deliberately buried under a smokescreen often making the original alleged corrupt act much worse by its deliberate cover-up through either political patronage or intimidation.¹⁹

16 Professor Kim Sawyer, evidence p.627.

17 Whistleblowers Australia, evidence p.699.

18 Len Wylde, evidence p.414.

19 Whistleblowers Action Group, Submission no. 49, p.14.

5.33 Organisations react to whistleblowing by adopting defensive mechanisms and attempting to discredit the whistleblower. The organisation exerts pressure upon the whistleblower to prevent him or her publicly exposing the wrongdoing. Internal review processes and grievance procedures are perceived as strategies designed to contain dissent within the organisation and silence the whistleblower. Organisations focus their attack on the whistleblower thereby marginalising, minimalising and trivialising the problem. It is the problem raised by the complaint which needs to be objectively assessed, not the whistleblower who raised the problem in the first instance.

5.34 Negative characterisation of the whistleblower is frequently cited as part of the organisational response. The whistleblower is variously cast as "a troublemaker, a zealot, a crusader, a pursuer of trivia...".²⁰ The unmistakable inferences carried by the use of such epithets cause substantial damage, not only to the whistleblowers reputation, but also to the course of the investigation of the disclosure. The insidious nature of such name calling is that the inferences which are raised are surprisingly difficult to 'shrug off'. The onus of proof swings onto the whistleblower - not to prove the truth or otherwise of the allegations, but to prove that he or she is not incompetent or unbalanced or vindictive. Organisations and the agency investigating disclosures ought to be particularly sensitive to the use of such labels about whistleblowers.

5.35 The whistleblower is accused of diminished work performance and complaints about personality faults and psychological imbalance are filed against them. Through a process of victimisation and harassment the whistleblower is shunned by previously supportive and friendly work mates and becomes socially ostracised. In effect, the culture of the organisation has imposed itself as staff adopt attitudes and behave in an out of character manner.

20 Professor Kim Sawyer, evidence p.627. See also Whistleblowers Action Group, evidence p.1091: "It is a common tactic to subjectively attack the individuals personhood by demeaning and labelling that person as less than nominal"; C.R. McKerlie, Submission no. 54, p.1: "I will be, at least subconsciously, dismissed as a ratbag, a troublemaker, a malcontent"; Keith Potter, evidence p.567: "busy bodies, doblers, zealots, stirrers, anti-establishment, etc. ... system buckers".

Employment related effects

5.36 Employment sanctions which a whistleblower can suffer include disciplinary action such as reprimand, transfer, demotion or dismissal. Other kinds of actions taken by an organisation against individuals occasionally appear to be less offensive actions implemented at lower levels. These can be manifested as more subtle, unofficial or indirect actions such as questioning of motives and personal attacks, abuse in the workplace by management or colleagues, social ostracism and intense scrutiny of work practices including investigation of time sheets. Referral for psychiatric assessment or treatment may occur for reasons which are tenuous and sometimes fabricated. The use of psychiatry is discussed further in Chapter 9.

5.37 Retaliatory measures used against whistleblowers by their organisations which have been reported to the Queensland Whistleblower Study include:

being assigned meaningless work, no work or excessive work; physical isolation, deprivation of resources; retrenchment, dismissal or forced resignation; punitive transfers; legal action designed to exhaust the employee's resources before justice can be had; "blacklisting" and denial of promotional opportunities; verbal and physical abuse; malicious and fictitious counter-allegations of wrongdoing; alleged insanity or other unsuitability for work; social sanctions such as ostracism; and "stakeouts" by private detectives.²¹

5.38 In certain professionally oriented areas of employment the actions taken against the whistleblower amount to intellectual suppression. This can include withdrawal of research funding, appropriation of intellectual property, restricting access to or withdrawal of support staff, denial of publication rights and rights to speak at conferences and destruction of the working environment in general.²² However, the subject of intellectual suppression or suppression of intellectual dissent is much broader than just whistleblowing. Dr Brian Martin advised the Committee that:

21 Queensland Whistleblower Study, evidence, p.1017.

22 Dr Kim Sawyer, evidence p.628 and Greenpeace Australia, evidence p.1297.

Basically, the concept of intellectual suppression looks at the source of the problem which is the power of various organisations or other bodies to stop a free discussion of ideas. By focusing on whistleblowing, you focus on the person who is perhaps challenging that power and in some ways is victimised.²³

5.39 The Australian Nursing Federation outlined some of the means of retaliation which may be used against a whistleblower in the nursing profession - the changing of rosters to disadvantage the whistleblower's employment, relocation of the whistleblower to an area requiring expertise for which the whistleblower is ill-equipped causing stress and eventual resignation and the making of notations on a whistleblowers employment record which can influence references for future employment.²⁴

5.40 Anecdotal evidence as to the personal effects suffered by whistleblowers was not limited to whistleblowers themselves or whistleblower support groups. Some investigative bodies also made reference in their submissions and evidence to these effects. The CJC described an extensive campaign of victimisation against a whistleblower which included: malicious rumours about the officer's sexual conduct; refusal of assistance from peers in the normal course of duties; picked on for trivial deviations from standard procedures; refusal by other staff to put through telephone calls; receipt of anonymous abusive and threatening mail and telephone calls and damage to whistleblower's vehicle.²⁵

5.41 The process of pressuring an employee out of the workplace can be readily achieved under the guise of redundancy procedures. These procedures provide employers with an ideal mechanism by which they can rid their organisation of whistleblowers. In subsequent investigations it can be difficult to prove that a

23 Dr Brian Martin, evidence p.814. See also Senator John Coulter, evidence pp.358-364. Intellectual suppression is considered further in the section on Education in Chapter 8.

24 Australian Nursing Federation, evidence p.472.

25 Criminal Justice Commission, evidence p.1165; see also David Landa (NSW Ombudsman), evidence p.743.

redundancy (or indeed redeployment or sacking) occurred due to an employee's whistleblowing and not due to the officially stated reasons of work demands, incompetence, inefficiency or personality problems. The linkage between whistleblowing and victimisation may in some cases, be beyond substantiation.

5.42 For the whistleblower problems can become self-perpetuating. The cumulative effect of the behaviour directed towards the whistleblower can lead towards reduced competency and efficiency. It is difficult to work at optimum performance levels when a person is suffering extreme psychological stress of workplace victimisation, harassment and ostracism. Extreme stress can lead to memory loss and other symptoms of ill-health which undoubtedly affect workplace performance. Days off work due to illness often follow and on occasions psychiatric assessment may be involved. These factors are then held by the organisation as evidence that the whistleblower is unable to cope with the demands of the job. They are portrayed as difficult, obstructive, incompetent, lacking commitment and lazy. The organisation can then sack the whistleblower with impunity.

5.43 Whistleblowers who have been sacked or forced to leave a particular job or employer often face discrimination in future employment. Case studies provided to the Committee have shown that whistleblowers face significantly reduced chances of obtaining future employment.²⁶ This applies across professions. In some instances whistleblowers have had to leave their chosen profession and apply for employment in alternative vocations at levels of pay and responsibility no longer commensurate with their qualifications and experience.

5.44 This loss of career and employment prospects is invariably associated with considerable financial loss. Some whistleblowers have become involved in protracted legal processes, the expense of which also significantly affects their financial situation. The stress generated by legal proceedings can contribute to a deterioration in health and personal relationships.

26 Desmond Childs, submission no. 45, p.3.

Health effects

5.45 Other effects upon whistleblowers involve their personal life. Many whistleblowers have reported adverse effects upon their physical or psychological health and well-being, usually attributed to stress. Symptoms have ranged from heart attacks, palpitations, menstrual irregularities, immune breakdown, migraines and weight gain and loss to insomnia, lethargy, sweats, flushes, agoraphobia, irritability, paranoia, and thoughts of suicide.²⁷ These general medical effects, particularly psychological, have been described in an article by Dr Jean Lennane printed in the British Medical Journal in September 1993.²⁸

5.46 The stresses involved from whistleblowing resulting in psychiatric and physical ill-health affect not just the whistleblowers, but also their spouses and children. There are often lasting or long term effects. Resultant medical costs, lost production and personal suffering and chronic disability are an enormous burden on both individuals and the community at large.

5.47 Symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTS) appear similar to those suffered by some whistleblowers. PTS is now recognised as a medical disorder which occurs when a victim's response to trauma involves intense fear and a profound sense of helplessness. In the crisis the person has had a change imposed upon their life with no right of reply. Taken to an extreme this crisis becomes a trauma. It involves symptoms such as anxiety attacks, nightmares, cold sweats, paranoia and a general feeling of helplessness.²⁹ For whistleblowers this can be reflected in obsessive behaviour, pursuing their case with a consuming passion and a loss of judgment in responding to people in relation to their case. Personal

27 Queensland Whistleblower Study, evidence p.1018.

28 Dr Jean Lennane, "Whistleblowing": a health issue, British Medical Journal vol. 307, September 1993, pp.667-670.

29 Mayo Clinic Family Health Book, William Morrow and Co., New York 1990, p.1037.

experience of these symptoms were related to the Committee by a number of whistleblowers.

5.48 Dr Lennane has noted with interest that it is becoming clear that even some whistleblower's persecutors are also under intense stress at times and may also experience adverse effects.³⁰

Effects upon family life

5.49 Personal relationships also suffer. Adverse effects upon relationships have included decreased friendliness, decreased sexual contact, preoccupation, irritability, relationship deterioration, and in some cases relationship breakdown.

5.50 Whistleblowers have reported that spouses who may be employed by the same organisation or within the same area of work have suffered personal harassment and detriment to career opportunity. There are some reports of whistleblower's children being victimised by class mates at school.

5.51 Evidence given to the Committee has demonstrated that whistleblowers can be very determined people. It is therefore difficult to understand why organisations involve themselves in costly exercises pursuing whistleblowers by attempting to discredit the individual rather than addressing the problem/wrongdoing which has been raised.³¹

5.52 This situation was summed up by Bill Toomer who wrote that most people:

30 Dr Jean Lennane, evidence p.707.

31 See also F&PA DFAT report, op.cit, p.53 which noted that the costs of continuing whistleblowing activity, to the individual and organisational targets, to the taxpayer and to the whistleblowers themselves can be large and will increase as the episode persists.

can surely see that it is far cheaper to 'grab the nettle' and investigate a whistleblowers complaint honourably and promptly than to consume vast resources trying to stymie a whistleblower who is likely to proceed in a determined search for redress.

It seems to me that a person with the type of character who will 'blow the whistle' on crime, wastes and injustices will predictably pursue action indefinitely against those injustices directed against him\her.

It can be self destructive to the whistleblower but the incredible waste of human resource and money by obtuse government authorities is all so needless in a country where such energy could be directed elsewhere to a positive effect.³²