
Employer at time of bullying: [REDACTED]

Role: Senior Media Relations Officer

Year: 2002

I am a [REDACTED] year old – now essentially unemployed – former public affairs practitioner. I was eight years a press journalist, followed by eight years in the [REDACTED] as a specialist Public Relations Officer where I rose to the rank of [REDACTED]. By way of establishing my bona fides I think the committee should know that since I left the [REDACTED] I held the following appointments including but not limited to:

- Public Relations Manager – [REDACTED]
- Public Relations and Marketing Manager – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- Director of Marketing – [REDACTED]
- Executive Director, Marketing and Communications – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- Senior Media Liaison Officer - [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

In the [REDACTED], I was for two years the Press Officer – [REDACTED] dealing with the [REDACTED]. I was also shadow [REDACTED] posted to roles with the [REDACTED] and with the [REDACTED]. Since leaving the [REDACTED], I also joined the [REDACTED] as a [REDACTED] and worked on such high profile issues management crises such as the so-called [REDACTED]. The point that I am trying to make is that I have management responsibility for staff numbers in excess of 300 and that I am no ‘woos’.

In late 2001, the [REDACTED] was seeking to appoint a [REDACTED].

I applied for the role and was successful. I had no idea there was a strong and ‘influential’ internal candidate. I also had no idea that the immediate supervising manager for this position was excluded from the selection panel for fear of bias. The selection panel thus consisted of the Acting Director of the [REDACTED], an external panellist representing the [REDACTED] and a senior officer from [REDACTED] HR.

On my first day at the unit, I felt an air of unease. I was not given a familiarisation with the layout of the office or the building or its facilities. For the first week I used the public toilet facilities in [REDACTED] before I accidentally discovered the staff toilets. I also had lunch across the road at the railway station because no one told me there was a staff canteen in the building.

As the [REDACTED] my job was essentially similar to that of a newsroom “chief of staff”. My role including making operational and technical improvements. After more than a month I was never invited to lunch, no after work ‘events’ – I knew that I was being *sent to Coventry* but I felt it was because of my extensive experience in operations and with the [REDACTED]. I felt that a professional performance and approach would eventually win over the staff. After some months of being ignored and rarely if ever spoken to even by the manager I was approached by a uniformed member of the [REDACTED] (Officer A) who said: “This can’t go on. I don’t know how you put up with it. I have to report it.” It was at that point that I felt a great deal of relief. *At last*, I thought, *a breakthrough*.

I subsequently learned that the unsuccessful internal candidate for the role had briefed the unit: “*When this new bloke turns up we’re going to give him hell. Don’t talk to him and don’t cooperate – we’ll see how long he lasts*”.

The manager, knowing my extensive operational and media background, referred to me behind my back as “the boy wonder”....all of this undermined my position in the unit.

Eventually, I broke under the pressure, attended a local doctor and received a certificate saying that I was unfit for work. A subsequent investigation substantiated all of the claims that I had made and that I had been subjected to severe bullying the details of which would now be common to the Workplace Bullying Inquiry.

But this is where I believe the system failed:

- I was diagnosed as 'sick' and given almost a year on sick leave before being returned to work in a unit in the [REDACTED] where I had no constructive role to play. In other words, rather than move the perpetrators, my situation was severely exacerbated by moving me out of the unit to an area where I was unfamiliar (but warmly welcomed)
- By the time [REDACTED] had finished with my case, I was asked to waver any rights for further compensation or to sue [REDACTED] for the bullying. I signed in a state of anguish
- During the investigation, Officer A, made a strong statement in support of my allegations. However, as Officer A confided in me later, when told that the statement would not be confidential the Officer withdrew the statement and watered it down telling the investigator: "The [REDACTED] is my career. I can't afford to make this statement like this because I reckon my career would be stuffed."
- Despite the WorkCover Investigation finding all of my claims to be true, no disciplinary action was ever taken against the primary bully or my immediate manager

Epilogue

Since leaving [REDACTED] I have not been able to hold down a job for any more than 18 months. I have had severe anxiety attacks that at times have held me captive at home or even in my room or office. At one time, having travelled to Canberra to address a Federal Parliamentary Committee I remained in my room feigning illness and returned home from Canberra early. I am not seeking anything but I have been told that I have a kind of post traumatic stress. No one is more embarrassed to use that clichéd term than me.

However, I no longer have the confidence I had when dealing with staff. I am deeply depressed and at times drink alone and to excess. I have not been able to hold down a relationship and I am now estranged from my loving daughter and grandson. I am deeply depressed and often suicidal. I have not been to Centrelink because the only permanent 'home' I have is living in a hangar and this is not allowed by Council; as the hangar is in a small regional town I am afraid that word of my living in it will get back to council. Ten days from now I will have maxed out my credit card and will start to sell my remaining assets.

All of my cash and superannuation have been spent on stupid purchases that are symptomatic of my depression. I am currently house sitting a friend's home in Sydney. How I will return to Melbourne is anyone's guess.

I realise this is a poor submission...but I am asking the committee to consider its bigger picture rather than the detail. I am just one story.

Kind regards

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