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Submission:

There is a known culture within MoPS that work is expected to be undertaken at all hours, without restrictions or care for personal life or individual welfare. This is particularly prevalent in portfolio positions or during election periods.

During my time I experienced on more than one occasion phone calls at 2am, continuing correspondence carrying over from the week across weekends and when on leave (sick or annual)

Regrettably, it is my opinion that the MoPS act agreement of either an ESA or PSA to be applied in lieu of reasonable over hours, allows the unrealistic expectation of being available at ALL hours. The 'reasonable hours' are not defined and are therefore left for interpretation (and in some cases, abuse). This abuse is not only from employing Senators and Members, but also from colleagues, supervisors and COS's.

The culture that is underlying, is that those who would indicate the need for reasonable working hours are often bullied, belittled or made to feel as though they are not up for the "extremely privileged" role they are in.

There is often not sufficient opportunity for down time, time to be sick nor to place importance on family and important life occasions, leading to burn out and resentment.

This approach to staff, and the "use up and replace" mentality sees a constant rotation of staff through offices, losing talent and experience to burn out and exhaustion.

Through observation of over [REDACTED] years serving as a Member of Parliament Staff, I would expect that the uptake of sick leave and annual leave is lower in politics than in other industries. I would also expect that the return to work for those who have had serious illness or life events, (such as following the birth of a child), is faster than other industries, particularly with male employees.

The MoPS act agreement fundamentally fails to address or replace the need for "time off in lieu". The agreement does not specify provisions for down time, of time between reportable shifts and hours of availability.

[REDACTED]

Furthermore the MoPS act allows for too much discretion around what is deemed 'reasonable' which evidently can vary greatly between offices or the employing Member or Senator.

Employment conditions, expectations and responsibility of the role can differ greatly between offices. Without the requirement for employees to be provided position descriptions upon employment by their employing Member or Senator, or guidelines on what is reasonable to expect of staff, the expectation of the employee can vary greatly depending on the week, mood or circumstance.

Although it is understood that the work is rather unique, the fact there are not specific requirements for employees to be given clear expectations of the role, nor having a predetermined agreement between the employer and employees on what is 'reasonable', the MoPS agreement contributes to the poor employment culture, burn out, loss of experience and abuse of staff that is known to occur.

There is a known saying amongst some of the staff in Parliament, that; the only person who is going to look out for you, is you.

There is clearly a need for culture shift.

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