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Submission:

The MoPS Act in its current form facilitates bullying, harassment, unfair workloads and unreasonable expectations. In an electorate office, There is no fairness in the allocation of work and resources such as allowances, travel and staff development.

For example, in the office I worked in, one staff member had styled [REDACTED] as Chief of Staff even though the [REDACTED] had the standard staff of 4 and was only an [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and another staffer made all the decisions arbitrarily about at what pay level new staff were appointed, and whether they were to be paid any of the allowance meant to compensate for out of hours work. Their plan was to divide that money between the 2 of them, instead of each of the 4 staff receiving \$15,000 each. Luckily they were so inept they did not correctly complete the request to appoint paperwork, so I did receive this \$15,000 p.a. allowance. A couple of months later, when they discovered their mistake, it was initially mooted that I would have to pay back the allowance I had received, which would have totalled about \$5K. Luckily this was not demanded of me, and I did continue to receive the allowance - which was just as well as I was working 7 days a week towards the end of my employment. Nothing in the MoPS Act specifies how this allowance should be allocated, or at what pay scale new staff should be appointed according to their qualifications, skills or experience.

I was told upon starting that I would have to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] as if I didn't questions would be asked in Canberra. In fact I was never asked. Because the MoPS Act allows for instant dismissal due to "loss of confidence" in the employee, it was impossible to counter any such demands.

I was responsible for WH&S reporting for our electorate office. When one staff member reported bullying to me, and then I myself witnessed and experienced bullying, the result was that in reporting it my continuing employment became untenable and I had to find alternative employment. When I [REDACTED], their response was "whatever you do, you will never work in politics again".

The Senator or MP should not have unlimited power over employees. Their needs to be external oversight of the employment relationship, and protection of compensation for "whistleblowers" who dare to complain about the behaviour of

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the MP, Senator or other staff. If the MoPS Act is not amended to facilitate this, nothing will change and people will continue to be injured personally and professionally.

Stronger allowances need to be made to protect staff from excessive workloads. For example, I was told one day that from then on I would be managing the Senator's public email inbox on my own, on top of my other office management duties. Before that, the 4 of us took turns so that we were aware of what kinds of issues our office was being contacted about. Being given that task made my workload untenable. After that, it was expected that I would work every day. I remember doing 21 days straight without a day off, and this was praised by the staff member who had [REDACTED]. Similarly, staff who travelled to or worked in the Canberra office stayed in the office for the whole time [REDACTED]. I tried, as WH&S officer, to raise fatigue management and organise a roster of staff so they did not have to be in the office from the start to the end of sitting days. This attempt was ignored and led to me being considered lazy and disloyal. The staff were not actually productive during these 9-18 hour days.

Finally the MoPS Act must include some kind of provision that requires Senators & MPs to adhere to a code of conduct, undertake regular meaningful, confronting training about bullying and sexual harassment that calls them out on their behaviour. Calling female staff [REDACTED] mocking non-binary interns for their pronouns, referring to female MPs and Senators as being crazy basket cases, and standing by without intervening when bullying, denigration or harassment occurs in front of them - these behaviours need to be reportable and actionable. If a loss of confidence in staff ensues, then the MoPS Act should include sizeable severance pay of at least 3 months' wages and a confidentiality agreement that would permit a staffer to work for a different MP or Senator without being disadvantaged. That's my dream anyway.

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