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Submission:
Merit based recruitment

The structure of salaries and the allocation of the EOA-C staff to electorate offices, in itself limits merit based employment. Of course salary impacts the ability to hire the smartest and most capable people but the incredibly low salaries in some instances, the fact overtime is not paid on a fair basis (no TOIL) and once you hit a top salary band there is nowhere to go, is a deterrent. There is a serious inequity in the allocation of positions which also results in personal staff positions en masse to some and none to others.

A highly qualified and experienced staffer in one office can be paid tens of thousands of dollars less than the same or a lesser qualified and experienced staffer in another office. There is also much scope for women to be paid less than men and I have witnessed this occur in EOs for people doing the exact same work with almost equal longevity in the role and the same qualifications. I have also seen and experienced people moving from one MP's office to another due to no fault of their own but in order to retain employment, and having to take significant pay cuts because the staff allocation is significantly different - yet the workload remains the same or greater.

The structure of travel allowances is such that not only are they completely inadequate to cover basic safe and comfortable accommodation let alone meals, in many locations, so-called senior advisers get a greater amount. It is very demeaning that certain people are permitted significantly more money for an overnight stay than others.

There are inequities across the board from the number of staff allocated to offices, arrangements made with individual offices, the discretion permitted to party leaders to allocate staff and positions, whether staff are allocated to those who hold committee roles, and so on. At the end of the day, your pay will not necessarily reflect your workload, responsibilities or experience and qualifications and that is very inequitable and unfair.

Procedural fairness

Staff are well aware there is nowhere to go when it comes to making complaints about their office and the consequences of doing so. Finance

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appears to be there to support the MPs and give them advice. Staff are left without a HR department to turn to. In my experience, staff also won't speak up if they feel it will jeopardise the workplace for other staff who may not have been subjected to the same behaviour or issues. Cover-ups are staged for the good of the party and MPs get away with bad behaviour.

The lack of training in how to manage staff is abundantly clear in MPs offices. It is incredible they are given budgets and staff to manage with zero training in many instances. It is not enough to train them in appropriate workplace behaviours but also how to lead and manage people and teams.

These workplaces are very unique and quite different to a corporate or other workplace. We work incredibly long hours at times and in very close confines of the parliament suite. The office therefore cannot operate in the exact same type of conditions and there must be a greater understanding about the true nature of the work and the relationships that exist between staffer and MP, especially for those in a chief of staff role.

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