

Terry's Story - Victimised and Sacked for Blowing the Whistle on Workplace Safety

I had been working for the APS for 30 years. A few years ago, I expressed concern to my superior officers about serious breaches of occupational health and safety laws by an individual employee, causing potentially serious injuries to other employees. As a result of my concerns being dismissed by my superior officers, I decided to approach Comcare. In my opinion, Comcare reached scathing findings of the lack of compliance with the occupational health and safety laws, but still my employer continued on with its dangerous practices. I subsequently went to the media.

As a result of blowing the whistle, I was victimised. My colleagues, whom I had an amicable relationship with, were all of sudden ordered to not talk to me about anything except work-related matters, to not socialise with me outside of work and to not car pool with me. Many of the weak-minded employees followed these orders. I was assigned to work shift hours starting in the early hours of the morning and I was given work that exposed me to potential health risks. I was frequently threatened that my employment would be terminated.

Not long after, a false charge was made against me to Human Resources that I had assaulted an employee. There were no witnesses to this charge and, in fact, it was the employee making the accusation who assaulted me. Despite the lack of compelling evidence, my employment was suspended for 2 years on the grounds of this false accusation. Just before the end of my 2 year suspension, my employer terminated my employment on various unfair or false grounds. My employer then subsequently published my dismissal letter on a television screen in a staff meeting for all to see. No doubt, this was meant as a warning to all employees about the consequences of blowing the whistle, and was meant to humiliate and demonise me.

As a result of the victimisation, my health, finances and family relationships have all suffered. Following my experience, my advice to Commonwealth employees wanting to blow the whistle is don't do it! In the Commonwealth, it is a crime to 'Commit the Truth'!