

#METOO BLOG

Published by Zoë Lawton

TRIGGER WARNING

This blog contains posts about sexual violence and may be triggering for some people.

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"Zoë, I would like to thank you for publishing this blog. It must have taken a lot of courage to create and maintain this initiative. I, and many of my colleagues, have discussed the reports recorded in the blog on a daily basis.

While not personally subject to any sexual harassment during my time as a lawyer, I have been subject to inappropriate and intimidating behaviour perpetuated by senior men towards junior women. That behaviour has largely gone unchecked. I have often thought about leaving the law. My experiences are nothing compared to the horrendous experiences of so many, but are just another example of the day-to-day injustice that women face in the legal profession.

Sadly, most of the people I have spoken to at a junior / mid-level are not surprised by the level of harassment and assault suffered by individuals in the law. However, we are shocked and concerned by the vitriol and fear shown by some male colleagues and superiors (some of which has been expressed in this blog). The me too movement simply proves what women have already known - that criminal and inappropriate behaviour occurs in the law incredibly frequently.

It is time for the profession to change."

Female, 26 - 35

"Thank you for this blog Zoë, I have read and discussed its contents with a number of colleagues (men in particular), and we all want to help make this profession a better, safer place for everyone to work. This has been a valuable way of sharing people's experiences, and I wanted to thank you for your role - as well as those who have shared their personal stories, many of which have left us lost for words. Arohanui."

Male, 26 - 35

"I have worked in several firms both in New Zealand and overseas. Law is not a female friendly profession and the discrimination and abuse of women is something I was conditioned to expect from the time I started clerking. I thought I could deal with it. I thought I would be resilient and aim to bide my time until the tide would turn and me and more of my female colleagues would be promoted to leadership positions and could affect the much needed change. I was naive to believe that it would happen given the number of female law grads. How wrong I was.

The system is so biased and so entrenched. Female leaders in toxic firms tend to be in their positions because they are not threats to the male establishment. In fact, they tend to behave in a way that supports it. HR is management. All the power is with the male dominated partnership. Lawyers inherently know and understand the risks of complaining and are risk adverse. Everyone knows it is better to try a different firm, take a in house job, or leave law altogether rather than taking on the establishment and risking your reputation, career and livelihood. So you accept the toxic culture and try to survive, while becoming completely desensitized to the behaviour around you to the point that you normalize it. All the while you watch your female colleagues drop away one by one until one day it's you whose had enough and is burnt out and cannot face one more day of hell.

My day came eventually and when I look back on my time in practice at one of New Zealand's top firms I only feel relief that I escaped that toxic prison."

Female, 36 - 45

"Thank you for your work on this, Zoë Lawton.

I have heard that that the ability to use confidentiality agreements to hide lawyer misconduct is limited due to legislation. This is not however the case in other law-related workplaces (such as universities) where such agreements could be routine if one goes to HR to get harassment to stop. Victims of harassment who sign non-disclosure agreements within the workplace are effectively muzzled from being able to warn younger potential victims about the perpetrators, and also barred from speaking out in other fora such as this.

I strongly urge the government to consider legislation banning confidentiality agreements covering behaviour that meets ss 108 and 109 of the Employment Relations Act (both sexual and racial harassment). I believe this is already being considered in some other jurisdictions. I hope New Zealand can be a world leader in this regard."

Female, 26 - 35

"I worked as a lawyer for 10 years, in large and medium firms, and in three different cities. Across the board, a recurrent theme for me, looking back, is arrogant and bullying behaviour, largely by men over 40. Lawyers on the other side who would scream down the phone, make you feel like you had made a huge mistake, belittled your submissions or legal view - all as a tactic to make you back down. I remember one lawyer who sat down in my office in a very confrontational way, legs apart, and table thumped the desk. When I didn't back down, he reverted to what I assume was his normal demeanour.

Discourteous, rude, bullying judges are also a problem. I enjoyed the law and the clients - it is some other lawyers and judges who make it a brutal experience. Arrogance, bullying and a strong sense of entitlement. How the hell did this happen? I also remember making a complaint to the local Law Society about a firm releasing funds without the necessary security in place for my client. [Outcome of complaint redacted as cannot be verified]. Unbelievable again. The best and brightest are leaving our profession and I don't blame them."

Female, 36 - 45

"You are very courageous and I wish you well. The NZLS is an out dated "old boys club" which look after the interests of it old school ties. It about time that this profession was monitored by an independent outside body."

Male, 65+

"I am a Junior in a small rural law firm. My boss is....a boss. I am not always "ok" with what I see or experience buuuut, I love and believe I have my dream job. I was cautious about where I worked and I know I made the right decision choosing small and rural over city and big. Not that there are much choices for grads.

The Law Society will not do anything about the many examples you will be able to provide them with Zoë. Because the Law Society has the power and is made up of powerful (cough) Lawyers. The rules will protect the Law Society from being held to account. Law Societies hold the dinners where they seat known male chauvinists beside young juniors, supplying alcohol and no host responsibility and then laughing at the men and women who get drunk and throw their weight around. I am yet to see it but I know, if I am subjected to half of the experiences detailed in this blog, I will happily end my professional career with an assault charge. I'm already a #survivor.

We need more powerful lawyers who have always been under dogs to move this forward and advance the inequality in power that exists.

To the NZ Law Society, we know you know. We know you allow. We are ALL watching to see how you protect the future advocates of the people of NZ. Please take action. Usually, I would sign my name. I am #tooscared

Female, 36 - 45

“Thank you Zoë. I have been holding off posting anything here for weeks, for fear of being identified by any details I might post. Doing the NZLS survey today was hard because, answering truthfully, I had to answer yes to almost every sexual harassment question. It made me realise I want to add my voice here too.

I have experienced, and I have female lawyer friends who have experienced, so many of the things described by others here - bum and breast groping, other unwanted touching, being propositioned for sex, questions about sexual preferences/favourite sex positions, being given a sex toy as a secret Santa gift in front of colleagues, and many unwanted sexually suggestive or explicit comments/emails etc.

To the guy who wrote: “How can so much 'behaviour' occur yet it is only reported and recorded when the momentum starts” - are you actually serious? I have personally experienced, and I have witnessed other female lawyers experience, the harsh repercussions of speaking up. They range from being laughed at or humiliated in front of others, to being denied work and eventually pushed out of a job, to being bullied and stalked. When faced with those options, do you really think someone who has worked so hard at law school and to build a legal career is going to speak up? It doesn't mean the behaviour of the perpetrators is acceptable or not serious, it means female lawyers are being put into situations where they are being forced to sacrifice their physical safety and mental wellbeing to keep their jobs. It's disheartening that a presumably intelligent person could not understand this predicament.

To all the contributors, you are so brave. I realise at the end of this post I have carefully worded it so as to not identify myself at all. Sad.”

Female, 26 - 35

“My first job as a lawyer in a so-called "boutique" firm had an awful impact on my early 20s. I was naive, I didn't come from the kind of background or community which prepared me for the reality of working in a "city" firm. Having worked in other jobs throughout school and university I was used to people being decent, honest and well-meaning. I honestly thought sexual harassment, while so wrong, was the norm, and that I was alone in how I felt about it.

Where I worked, all the male partners (there were no females) were having affairs with people in the workplace, and one groomed me: it made me so uncomfortable but I felt powerless and afraid to do anything: he was my boss who I had to work with directly. There was no genuine HR function. There was such an emphasis on alcohol, which wasn't my thing at all, but if you didn't drink then you got bullied. It took leaving the country and starting at a new (large) firm for me to see how wrong and dysfunctional my first firm was.”

Female, 36 - 45

“Thank you for running this blog - time for the profession to get its shit together. We are all human and deserve to be treated with respect. Props to the people who are supporting this movement. Even though it is entirely understandable to be tired from hearing about it, it is really important that we

talk and actually DO something about it. A law firm's (and organisation's) best assets are its people - you aren't anything without them. Treat them with respect - it ain't that hard.

"He aha te mea nui o te ao. He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing in the world? It is the people, it is the people, it is the people."

Female, 18 - 25

"To the person who wrote the below post,

"The predominant issue here is that none of the complainants below managed to speak out at the time of the alleged incidents. This speaks volumes in itself as to the actual extent of the actions and I wonder whether, with the benefit of time, they are being blown out of proportion. How can so much 'behaviour' occur yet it is only reported and recorded when the momentum starts. I am starting to doubt the veracity of many of the reports on this blog and I think the movement is out of control."

Male, 36 - 45

It is really hard to speak out when the person who is bullying or sexually harassing you is paying your salary, controlling the type of work you are getting, and has the potential to ruin your career.

There is an article online about how HR at [employer redacted] told summer clerks to focus on the summer holistically and to be careful not to defame the firm. I understand the most serious allegation over that summer was one of rape. That's the kind of culture we are in and that is why it is hard to speak up.

Female, 26 - 35

"I worked in the Auckland offices of two large national law firms in the mid-2000s. I did not witness any sexual misconduct first-hand, but heard about several incidents of partners and other senior lawyers sexually harassing and/or having questionable sexual encounters with junior lawyers, graduates, summer clerks and support staff - corporate and finance teams generally seemed to be the worst culprits. Some of those may have been consensual, but there was always a strong sense of a power balance at work. I knew of several affairs between partners and junior lawyers (always women), one partner in his 40s who left his wife for a summer clerk in her early 20s, and another partner who kept a collection of pornography in his office that he showed off to younger staff.

I did witness first-hand the sexist culture that I believe contributed to an unhealthy and sexist culture: hiring practices focused on hiring attractive young women and white, privileged and entitled men, pressure to work long hours and junior lawyers having minimal social interaction outside their workplace for long periods of time (which removed perspective, and helped to normalise bad behaviour), partners encouraging younger male lawyers to adopt their sexist attitudes, and senior staff focusing their attention on young women at functions. The drinking was excessive, but only a problem in that it lowered men's inhibitions such that they were happy to act on their worst impulses.

The promotion of senior women to partnership was few and far between, and there was a perception that those with families did not have the ambition or working capacity to justify promotion to partnership (a perception that was wholly unjustified - many of our most diligent and effective lawyers were working mothers). The partners that made these decisions were uniformly male. HR existed to do the bidding of partners, pushing out anyone who raised concerns about the culture and behaviour of senior staff.

I found the corporate culture at the time sickening, and it worsened over my time in large forms. I wished I had done more than just complaining to my peers and sometimes cautioning juniors, although the only impact may have been on myself and my career prospects. I later worked at a smaller firm with a number of ex-large firm partners. In conversations with them, it emerged that they were just as disgusted with the behaviour of some of their colleagues and that it had informed their decision to leave and set up their own firm. I wonder what they might have achieved had they pushed harder for change in the large firms they worked within.

None of the stories emerging surprise me in the slightest, but I am saddened to be a member of a supposedly ethical profession that has done so much to entrench regressive sexist views and oppress and abuse women."

Male, 36 - 45

"The predominant issue here is that none of the complainants below managed to speak out at the time of the alleged incidents. This speaks volumes in itself as to the actual extent of the actions and I wonder whether, with the benefit of time, they are being blown out of proportion. How can so much 'behaviour' occur yet it is only reported and recorded when the momentum starts. I am starting to doubt the veracity of many of the reports on this blog and I think the movement is out of control."

Male, 36 - 45

"I have worked in law firms since 1993 (with time off for children). I never experienced any sexual abuse but definitely bullying. Particularly at the barristers chambers where I last worked. Scrolling through all these posts just reaffirms to me why although a qualified legal exec, I never want to work in a law firm again. They broke me (one woman in particular. I hope she's pleased with herself)."

Female, 36 - 45

"If the Law Soc is not aware, [employer redacted] in Tauranga has had a problem with sexual harassment the last 4 years. I know 3 young female lawyers who have left as a result of the partner's behaviour. I understand - rumours are rife - that he left on [date redacted to prevent identification of individual] due to an 'incident' at the firm's [date redacted] xmas function. It amazes me this went on for YEARS & no-one spoke out; must have been several confidential settlements."

Female, 18 - 25

"In my last legal role with the government the bullies got promoted. They work across all areas of criminal justice. It truly is a sickening boys' network that unions and employees are powerless against.

There's something fundamentally wrong with this country if people are too scared to go to the Human Rights Commission due to fear of being identified and never working again. [Name of whistle-blower redacted] has her own Wikipedia entry for goodness sake."

Male, 26 - 35

"I was a litigation lawyer in Rotorua. Appearing in the High Court one day, there were many other lawyers - all male. Justice [name redacted] winked at me as I presented my submissions. I carried on with my case: I didn't know what else to do. Was it meant to destabilise me? It is trivial compared to other testimonies on this site. But it was inappropriate and sexist. No winks for male lawyers, just the only young woman lawyer in the courtroom."

Female, 46 - 55

"Dear Zoë,

I have been in practice 30 years and have certainly observed sexism, sexual harassment and bullying and had a few male clients attempt to pull me in to unwelcome embraces along the way. I was part of raising concerns about these issues 25 years ago in a major national firm. It is very disheartening to learn that very little has changed.

I want to thank you for your huge courage in opening up this blog and show my support for you. Your blog has been very important in giving people affected by these issues a safe place to record their experiences. You have stepped in and showed leadership in a meaningful way.

Kia Kaha!"

Female, 46 - 55

"I have been reluctant to post to this for the same reasons I was fearful to speak up at the time of incidents. Most young women in the profession know or at least have been told that those who make the money are protected and those that complain are moved on or worse blacklisted and told they will never work in the profession again.

For me the situation that brought this topic to the media and started a much needed conversation is indicative of a culture in the law and symptomatic of a homogenous leadership in the law. I have had some amazingly supportive mentors and managers (both women and more often than not men).

Women in leadership are perceived to be an exception and people question what it is that they did differently to make it. Did they forego a family, did they pay for external help, did their partner take on the primary carer role, did they wait "a bit longer", are they a "bitch" or a "ball buster" or did they start their own firm?

The culture is so pervasive that it starts with things as small as men being praised for being “good dads” when they pick up their kids or go home early to “help out” yet women “aren’t committed”.

Starting at law school the “work hard play hard” party culture makes you a social outcast if you don’t drink heavily.

When you have an old boys club and a group of men who protect each other it is hard to shift a culture. Standards committees are mainly senior lawyers who are male and the culture that has been created is protected. Standards committees should be representative of the profession with younger people holding a certain number of seats. Often younger people have a stronger sense of what is inappropriate as they don’t have the “that is nothing compared to what we went through” or the “everyone does that they need to toughen up” attitudes.

In my years or practise I have had several experiences of being bullied and harassed (which at the time I minimised). I have been in highly toxic work places which I didn’t realise were so toxic till I was out of them.

I have been bullied in the work place (which was handled poorly) by another women who took a disliking to the way I dressed.

In another experience I had a managing partner (a women) who was awful to women (who she called girls) but babied the “boys”. [Redacted at the submitters request]. The culture of entitlement of the men was fed.

I had an old male lawyer sexualise my name in emails and tell me that women with big mouths are only in the law for one reason and it isn’t talking.

I’ve been asked to tell other women (more junior) lawyers who they should avoid at client functions so they don’t get groped rather than the client not being invited.

I’ve been told by a very senior member of the judiciary that it was nice to see me in Court as I was much more pleasant to look at than all the old men that he sees most of the time.

I have been called missy, young lady and girly more times than I care to think of.

I was brought into a meeting for my expertise in an area of law and then asked if when I went to meetings If I could not talk as the client wants to hear it from a man and that I should give the details to a more junior male lawyer and write the letters but the more junior lawyers name would be signed and he would do the talking. I was welcome in the meeting because the client liked to look at me but didn’t want to hear me talk.

I have been asked ‘do you want to “practice” getting pregnant with someone other your husband.’

I have supported women after receiving unwanted approaches from partners and barristers but they are their stories to tell.

[Redacted at the submitter's request].

The reason I decided to submit to the blog is because I want change and I really don't see it coming at the moment. Hopefully if those that can make change read the experiences or people in the law they might just realise the time for talk and reviews is over.

My main suggestion is get diversity in the NZLS spots for men and women of all stages of the profession. Stop having the same voices heard.

Have categories for elections of men and women aged 20-29, 30-39 etc. Their experiences are different. Stop having white males whose wives stay at home and raised children as the voice of all lawyers."

Female, 26 - 35

"As a graduate I worked for a law firm on [street name redacted] in Wellington. When I was a graduate I received a call early Saturday morning asking me to go to the partners house to help him with a liquor licence, I don't know why I wasn't asked to meet him at the office. I went to his house and he answered the door with shorts on and no top, I immediately felt uncomfortable. It was only him and I at his house, and he was approx. 20 years older than me. While I was there I felt uncomfortable and made an excuse to leave. At the same firm, comments were made by 2 of the partners about how I looked, and a comment was made that sex sells so they should use me for grad recruitment advertising. It was definitely a boys club atmosphere. As a young female there was no one to mention the comments to as it would have been career limiting."

Female, 36 - 45

"I was learning a great deal from a partner at my work who had become something of a mentor. I was sexually harassed by him and reported it immediately.

The experience itself was awful and heart-breaking given the relationship we had had. I wanted to leave my job, particularly during the awkward limbo before he officially left.

What was most disappointing for me was the reaction of the office. He had been at the firm for decades and was a charismatic member of the team. When it was announced he was leaving, it didn't take people long to work out why (he had been involved in similar conduct before), and who was to "blame", by the process of elimination. Since then I have been ostracized by some at work, and it has become an incredibly lonely place.

I used to love my job. Now I feel that I have no choice but to leave for the sake of my mental health and career. It is incredibly unjust and unfair, but it feels like there is simply nothing that I can do other than to leave."

Female, 26 - 35

"When I was still a law student, I attended an Auckland District Law Society event where I met a male barrister who specialised in [practice area redacted].

I was interested in that field, so I was excited to be talking to him and asked him a lot of questions about his work. However, out of the blue he made an inappropriate comment about my physical appearance which made me very uncomfortable. I quickly excused myself from the conversation, and thought that would be the end of it.

A couple of months later I attended another Law Society event. The same barrister was there. He saw me across the room and immediately walked over to the circle that I was in and said how glad he was to see "the pretty lady" again.

I felt uncomfortable so I moved to another area of the room and joined a different conversation. However only a few minutes later he walked over to me again. This time, he passed behind me and ran his hand over my rear end before joining the circle and standing right next to me.

I was in such shock that I had been publicly groped that I did not say anything at the time but I wish that I had."

Female, 18 - 25

"Following graduation, I worked as a law clerk in one of the 'big' law firms, The team was led by a senior partner renowned for being a social 'big teddy bear' and I recall other law clerks being envious that I was in the 'fun' team.

I was soon to learn, however, that the partner was also a narcissistic bully, who delighted in recruiting and eventually destroying young females. He would carefully provide mentoring and guidance through that first law clerking year, but upon admission to the bar his attitude would change overnight. Suddenly every action on every file was wrong. The 'fun' exterior remained on the surface but he employed isolationist tactics, and in private behind a closed office door he would belittle, undermine and humiliate.

Most females survived less than a year in the team following admission to the bar. I managed to last 3 years, and it all but destroyed me. I raised the bullying behaviour with HR and received no support or assistance. I tried to access the free EAP counselling service and was advised my firm's arrangement was that all counselling access had to be approved by HR. On request to HR I was advised the partner in my team would have to consent to this first, and of course his consent was not forthcoming. I clearly set out to HR the pattern of behaviour that was occurring (I could name at least 6 previous junior female employees in the team who had suffered from the same pattern of bullying behaviour who had left the firm) and they promised that the partner would 'improve his management skills'. Of course nothing changed. I eventually left the firm a shell of my former self, and never returned to practice law again.

Over 10 years on, I still have the dubious distinction over being the longest-standing female member of the team, and nothing about this partner's behaviour has changed."

Female, 36 - 45

"I experienced bullying and discrimination to such an extent in my first job post-qualification that it has deterred me from working as a lawyer in New Zealand.

Workplace Bullying

A male colleague bullied me over the course of one year. Because we were on the same team and he was constantly underperforming, there was pressure on me to pull his weight. This meant that we had to work in close proximity to each other while I practically did his work for him. Over the course of just over one year, he made sexually inappropriate and offensive remarks to me (for example, rape jokes when discussing a rape case and objectifying female victims, lawyers and judges known to us) and racially offensive remarks, which were both generalised and aimed at me. He also repeatedly called me names, taunted me, and half-jokingly threatened to harm me ("I could kill you with these scissors now if I wanted to"). At first, I tried to ignore him and was initially reluctant to report his behaviour because he is well liked and I feared the repercussions from speaking out (read: immense gossip). However, I became extremely depressed and anxious, could not sleep well, and was uncomfortable and afraid of working with him. My self-esteem and confidence also took a toll. Eventually, an internal investigation into his conduct was launched but I ended up leaving the job several months later because I no longer had the emotional capacity to work there.

Discrimination

That same year, an experienced criminal lawyer was racially discriminatory, rude and insulting to me at work. What she said to me was shocking, appalling and unacceptable. When I wasn't able to give her what she wanted, she looked at me and told me to go back to the concentration camp in North Korea where I belonged.

My work encouraged me to report the incident to the Standards Committee. This became a stressful and emotionally draining seven month ordeal. In her submissions and subsequent correspondence, she continued to make racist remarks and assumptions about me and by what she perceived to be my 'race' of people. She submitted that English was obviously not my first language and assumed that I spoke a certain language and was of a certain race based on my name and physical features. This was all wildly inaccurate. She also rebutted any allegations of racism by saying that she could not possibly be racist because she had made friends of the same perceived race. It was unbelievable. Though the Standards Committee found that she fell below proper standards of professional conduct, I have not received any formal apology from her.

I have since chosen not to remain in the legal profession."

Female, 26 - 35

"During my honours year at law school I wrote a paper comparing two cases in NZ and the UK. In the paper I critiqued the outcome of the NZ case. My supervisor sent my paper to the senior lawyer in the NZ case for feedback and arranged for me to meet him at his office.

On arrival at his office he was extremely friendly in the reception area where the receptionist was present. As soon as we went into the meeting room and the door closed his entire persona changed. He berated me for the next 15 minutes for being critical of the case outcome - I did not manage an entire sentence in my defence in that time. He started by calling me a 'silly little girl', made a number of threats that made me feel incredibly unsafe being alone in a room with him, and concluded by saying he would ensure I would never be employed in the organisation he worked for - something that until that point had been my dream job. I left the meeting humiliated and on the verge of tears and I still shudder whenever I see his name in media reports.

I was too scared to tell anyone (including my supervisor) about this encounter, given the threats he made. Although this happened almost 15 years ago, I have never shared it with anyone until now."

Female, 36 - 45

"I worked in a Law Firm for 2 years after leaving school and was so shocked to see how sexist the men in those firms are to woman still, we are in the 21st century. I was made to feel uncomfortable when being forced to go into a meeting with two of my male bosses who would put me down, make me feel so small and just uncomfortable. There was another young woman who worked there around the same time who dressed in short clothing which wasn't appropriate, and when some staff complained and said that, they didn't care because they liked the view."

Female, 18 - 25

"When I started in the profession I had nothing but respect and admiration for my direct up-line manager (who was a male) and my office manager (who was a female).

Fast forward to 3 months ago, when I couldn't manage the weight of the panic attacks and mental breakdowns, my EAP services counsellor would go on to tell me that my male manager was classed as a corporate psychopath and my office manager was one of his enablers.

Alarm bells started to go off when I used to get out-of-hours emails from my male manager, at first making light jokes and asking how I was going and citing that he had to 'look after me' because I was the youngest member of his team.

While out at lunch with the office secretary and I, said male manager asked us both; what types of guys do we date and when was my last boyfriend. He knew that the secretary was in a relationship and had a baby, but he also knew that I was single. He would veil his 'harmless' questions under a visage of brown-people-stick-together because apparently Maori and Pacific Island lawyers have a level of camaraderie that warranted talking to each-other like Uncle Bully does to Grace.

As an example of other female practitioners acting badly towards each-other – one girl in my team

who was a little bit older than me and had been at the department longer, had noticed that the limelight had shifted away from her. In retrospect, I think she was used to being the 'prize-pig' in the room at any given time. While I usually ignored her and her penchant for gossip, she took it upon herself to lie to our male manager and tell him that I had a boyfriend. I'll never forget the pleased look on her face and subsequently – the look of rage on his, after she told him. While my personal life was none of their business, I tried futilely to correct her comment as I suspected it might negatively impact me later on. I had no idea how bad it would get.

From then on every 'catch-up' with the male manager would turn into verbal abuse and ranting where he'd say things like; 'between the hours of 8:30 – 5 you belong to me' and that he expected something better from a Maori lawyer and regretted hiring me let alone paying me the wage I was on. He would always wind the 1 hour abuse sessions up with comments like that I'd never make it in another law firm and that staying here at the firm was my best, and only bet.

He said I barely knew nothing about the law and at one instance after I had run a hearing and got a positive result he shrugged his shoulders and said I did a good job for a 'average lawyer'.

My female manager, who I now regard as lower than the fleas on a dog – would smile to my face and tell me in catch up meetings that I was doing really well. But after her initial catch-ups with the male manager – he would verbally berate me about my work, my timing, my client-interviewing skills, even about what I did outside of work. He would cite that my female manager had no confidence in me.

She would go on to ask me if I had a mental impairment and what mob gangs my family were affiliated to (none if you were wondering). In another instance, she took me aside and told me I had to inform her about every instance I went to the bathroom.

I told the Union but didn't have much confidence with what , if anything they could do. He'd been there 20+ years, as had she. I had been told that ramifications for my future career could go up in flames. I balked when the union suggested we all sit in a room together and 'talk-out' our issues. No thank-you.

I hear now that there are seminars/discussion groups being run by female sections of the Law Society, where they talk about safety in the workplace and dealing with bullying. After trying to RSVP to one, I've also heard that the tickets to attend sell out quicker than a Beyonce concert. It is good to see women in practice coming together, but it is sad to think that there are countless other women who have had experiences like mine."

Female, 26 - 35

Thursday 5 April 2018

"One office of a national firm is well known for the "hot seat" where staff are subjected to public personal questioning. Nothing is off limits. Participation is coerced.

The CEO of a large firm directed a deliberately provocative sexual innuendo to me in front of my

colleagues. I had barely interacted with him before that remark. It was humiliating. He was also known to comment on the appearance of teenage/early 20s admin staff.

As a junior solicitor I suffered through inappropriately sexualised discussions with partners too numerous to mention.

Being invited to chambers after hearings to “work”. Naively appearing ready to do so and waiting for an opportunity to escape.

And of course it's rare that a month goes by when there isn't a comment on when I might have children. Some more intrusive and inappropriate than others. The question of when/if I will be pregnant has been “not asked” in every interview I've ever had."

Female, 36 - 45

"Having read many news articles and opinion pieces on the state of the legal profession in the last few weeks, it has made me realise how desensitised I have become to the sexist, homophobic, bullying and generally 'entitled' attitude that prevails in law firms. I spent most of my first 10 years of practice at big firms and when I left to move in house I joked about leaving a toxic environment, but I'm only now realising how bad it was. There were so many interactions every day that weren't acceptable it's like a thousand paper cuts - impossible to remember any particular one.

As a female your best approach was to laugh along with the jokes - even at your own expense or that of other females/anyone not in the 'partner's inner circle' of fawning junior male solicitors - otherwise you were too sensitive, not hard enough, not good enough, not able to take a joke etc etc and pushed even further out of the circle in terms of working on the good transactions. You ended up feeling dirty if you went along with the banter but it was one of the best ways to ensure your workflow. So much for merit based...

And as much as [employer redacted] has denied that the summer clerk list was deemed a 'menu', on a number of occasions I witnessed the list circulate closely followed by loud commentary from male partners and solicitors about the relative attractiveness of the female summer clerks and who might be 'up for it'. A particularly attractive grad who was yet to start work was also specifically called up to act as a 'tee girl' in a client golf competition. But no one could dare try and say that was unfair/objectification etc. So many examples I could go on for pages.

It will be an uphill battle to change this profession because not only are there horrific incidents like those in the media, but it's all the subtle behaviours that are so frequent and the attitudes so pervasive. This blog is a great start though. Thank you."

Female, 36 - 45

"My first job after qualifying was with one of the partners in a boutique firm who took childlike delight in deliberately mangling any attempt at pronouncing Te Reo Maori.

He frequently referred to clients and colleagues alike using racist and homophobic slurs and continued to do so after I approached him and asked him to stop.

During a meeting he singled me out for criticism over how I had managed a particular set of files. When I explained myself he cut me off and in the same breath praised a male colleague for managing his own set of files the same way.

This partner would leave his empty coffee cups on the desks of females members of staff and on one notable occasion I arrived at work to a pile of clothes that needed to be sent to the dry cleaner.

Myself and another colleague were told during our first week about an individual who took a PG against their former employer who "will never work in [town] again".

Each time I approached HR about his behaviour, I was told to cut him some slack as he was under a tremendous amount of stress and that I should give him another week and his mood would improve. His behaviour was minimised and excused in this manner by HR for years.

We were also expected to turn a blind eye to the partner hiring his mistress. It was awkward beyond description to be forced to watch these two specimens cavorting and frolicking like mammals from one of the less well-regarded wildlife documentaries."

Female, 26 - 35

"I'm a practicing lawyer. Like many others, I started off my career as a legal clerk. The female employee (non-lawyer) who managed the clerks was a notorious bully.

Several clerks developed depression and anxiety because of the bullying.

I won't give details as those would identify parties involved, but suffice to say management knew about her awful behaviour (which included sexual harassment of the clerks and other staff members) and did nothing, despite receiving many complaints from many different employees. As far as I know, she's still working there.

Thankfully the clerk job was relatively short-lived and I moved on to another job.

Now, most of the members of the legal profession I know are decent, professional and humble people. I love this profession and my job. Hopefully it stays that way."

Female, 18 - 25

"Being a law student and a young lawyer in Wellington was wonderful, and instilled in me a great love for the law. I was mentored, nurtured and supported by some great men and have felt so grateful for that in my 25 years of legal experience since.

But sexual harassment was an unrelenting and continually occurring background noise, at least in the 1990s. At university, there were sexually inappropriate comments and touching by law teachers. As a summer law clerk in major firms, there were comments about the way that women lawyers looked and edicts about how we were meant to dress and act. As a recently qualified lawyer there were comments from judges about our bodies and a gaze that focussed variously on breasts and buttocks; and non-consensual sex with a senior lawyer while travelling elsewhere in NZ for a case. While I strongly identified as a feminist, I found it impossible to take any actions to stop the more violent of this sort of behaviour and accepted the words/gaze as inevitable.

My experience of leaving NZ in the late 1990s to work abroad unfortunately showed me that things were worse elsewhere! Somehow, the dominant paradigm in the UK legal profession, for example, was more obviously and obnoxiously sexist. Nevertheless, we should be demanding that the NZ legal profession do better - now a senior lawyer myself, working outside NZ, I still have postcards of Kate Sheppard and Ethel Benjamin on my desk which fill me with pride for many of the 'firsts' achieved by NZ women.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to contribute to this, and look forward to watching the next steps. As I read over what I have written, I see how unacceptable this behaviour was; I would be incredibly distraught if my daughters were to tell me similar stories! It is good to take a stand."

Female, 46 - 55

"I have been working in the legal profession continually since 1990, except for a year or so off with my first child.

I started in admin roles for a large NZ firm, and progressed to solicitor roles in the private (small NZ firm, large UK firm) and public sector (UK Local Authority, NZ Govt) here and overseas.

I have never been sexually harassed. A couple of times (a coffee catchup, work thankyou lunch) male colleagues enquired about whether I was "available", but after a polite "not interested" the topic dropped.

I have had awesome male and female mentors and colleagues, of all ages, and some disagreeable ones - likewise for clients!

I've had great support with pregnancies and flexible working, in both the private and public sector. 14 years ago I chose to move to the latter after having my first child, as I wanted to be the primary caregiver and didn't want to work overtime or attend marketing related things in evenings/weekends taking me away from my children.

Early on in my career, a male judge in his 60s ripped my case to shreds, whilst being chummy to his law school mate of a similar age and sex. I don't know if that was because of his age, his sex, or my case (I did have a losing case). Equally, in early days I recall a male police officer help me out in Court when I was landed with someone else case and was about to forget to ask a crucial element. My

experience was that litigation or corporate teams used to have more impolite aggressive (even loudmouthed) individuals than other teams such as tax or property. I also thought the nature of their work was generally more stressful. I identified and stayed around the agreeable members of the former, and chose to work in the latter departments.

I've seen personal relationships forged through these working environments leading to decades long marriages.

I've heard gossip about office liaisons (consensual) - the difficulties have only arisen when work time has been used inappropriately or I've met (through work) the spouse too.

I am shocked and saddened beyond belief by the suffering evident in stories on this blog. I hope it leads to an open reasonable discussion, beyond any group identities (we are all individuals, with responsibilities and rights) about our responsibilities and our rights so that we end up with workable responses, as opposed to unworkable ones - and in that regard I suggest we'd be well advised to think carefully before adopting some of the "solutions" in America and Canada (mandatory reporting of workplace relationships or the Ontario Law Society's mandatory Statement of Principles (to get a Practising Certificate))."

Female, 46 – 55

"First job as a newly admitted solicitor at the age of 22. Employed by an all-male firm of solicitors to practice as a family lawyer.

When the time came to employ a new graduate as the family practice had grown after a year or so I asked the Litigation Partner - in front of the Family Law Partner - and support staff what qualities they were looking for with the new graduates. The answer "Blonde hair and big tits" - this from the man who interviewed and employed me in front of the other man who interviewed and employed me. (And guess what? I have blonde hair and...)

We then both went to court and the Registrar asked the same question of this man - and he gave the exact same answer in front of me again.

Same firm - when asked by the new graduates what the firms policy was on maternity leave at a staff meeting - the same male partner said - you get pregnant, you leave. In the presence of the same other partner.

Same firm - male associate lawyer - saw all female graduate lawyers as potential girlfriends - inappropriately and obviously to those watching. My experience was you had to be rude to him to make him back off. The firm did nothing to stop this and the partners joked about it.

The same partners got annoyed when anyone spoke of attending any women lawyer functions as they don't have those for men (um partners meetings?) and are blatantly homophobic and generally sexist.

The women professional staff were called girls by the practice manager and comments were made

about our women clients needing to be branded when they applied for more than one Protection Order after being repeat victims of Domestic violence from partners.

25 years on and this still makes my blood boil."

Female, 46 - 55

"I am a litigator and have been in practice for three years. I am one of those who are "lucky" and frequently have said this. This movement tells me we need to stop that attitude, saying minor things that happen to us make us "lucky".

I have been bullied by older men in this profession and it's bullshit.

The first time I was yelled at over the phone for sending a letter "that was the most outrageous claim" this lawyer had EVER read and he was going to report this to my boss who "clearly didn't know what I was doing". After he hung up and I stopped crying, I was able to tell my boss who quickly told the other lawyer he had drafted it but I had completed it when he was away. The guy then settled the case on the sum I had provided in the letter. I later bought it up with him at a social function, I said (laughing of course) "you were the first lawyer to make me cry" he said - "I don't even remember that".

I have had letters from a male lawyer at a certain firm on multiple occasions (they must have a precedent) saying they will make a law society complaint (against me!) if I didn't force my client to withdraw their urgent protection order.

Most recently a male older lawyer called me and yelled that I had lost my client "tens of thousands of dollars" by my court actions. As he was yelling I tried to explain I had taken parenting proceedings, not relationship property ones (not that we weren't entitled to both) and then he got an email from the court mid rant and said "oh it's about parenting... she's still going to lose money over this". At that point, fed up I said "I don't appreciate these threats ..."but before I could finish this sentence he said "I don't like your tone miss", ranted about my inappropriate tone to a senior lawyer and hung up on me.

This intimidating, bullying behaviour has to stop."

Female, 18 - 25

"Just want to say, thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

Female, 36 - 45

"When I was a graduate at the Auckland office of [employer redacted], the senior partner, [name redacted] was well known for looking female staff up and down. You could not walk into his office without him doing a full up and down ogle.

Before the Christmas party the secretaries would tell the young / new female lawyers to keep away from him as he had wandering hands.

It was true what they said - in my first year, his junior had a terrible experience where he groped her breasts after a client function. For the next function, us juniors discussed how she could get out of drinking and staying longer. The best idea we came up with was to pretend she was on antibiotics. There was no question of going to HR - she was the senior partner's puppet and completely untrustworthy. We all accepted that there was nothing the junior could do or she would likely lose her job. I still feel guilty that as lawyers we just accepted it and did not do more.

The firm has such high turnover rates. At that time it was an all-male partnership. In the past few years, 1-2 females have become partners. I realise now after working in other places where the culture is great, that it was a really toxic workplace. Bullying, sexual harassment were rife.

Thank you for doing this blog. It has brought up a lot of thoughts / feelings about my graduate experience. It is satisfying to know that predators like [name redacted] may have been forced to reflect on their behaviour and by being "on notice" will hopefully have curbed their actions."

Female, 26 - 35

"I've worked in the court system and would like to share some of the experience I had with lawyers.

In 2016, NZ Herald published an article: *Lawyer told court staff 'go back to North Korea'* http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11726791

Unfortunately, the name was suppressed by the Law Society. There are a lot of lawyers who have a sense of entitlement and bully their way to get things done.

In one incident, I can vividly remember, a lawyer's invoice was queried (for government-funded family court matter), he called and verbally abused me for 15 minutes and I had to cut off the phone. Being intimidating and verbally aggressive was one of their tactics to succumb to their way.

The Law Society can censure a person (as the above case shown), but there is no social stigma placed on the aggressor and often money is not the way to compensate the wrong that the person had done to the victim. We need a better transparency."

Male, 46 - 55

"Back when I was aged 7-13 a close family friend who I respected so much had the audacity to slowing groom me gaining my trust 100% and bribing me until he had got that much in my head I couldn't see what he was doing as wrong until the day he sexually assaulted me. He threatened me not to speak of what had happened and then went onto continuously stalking me. I would get a new number and I got a message from a close friend that she had a new number and to meet for lunch expecting to see her - it was him. Years of police investigation went by and he has now been charged with 15 years

imprisonment for the rape of 3 girls aged 7-12. I regret never coming out the moment I felt a bad vibe with the comments being made by him."

Female, 26 - 35

Wednesday 4 April 2018

"A former partner from [employer redacted] joined my workplace a few years ago. He attempted to joke about referring to female summer clerks as the "menu" with some of the younger men at my workplace (they were not amused). It makes me angry that [employer redacted] publicly denied referring to summer clerks as the menu, when it's something everyone knows is true."

Female, 26 - 35

"Racism. Racism in the hands of senior lawyers that could quote the NZBORA in their sleep. Sadly, New Zealand has a long way to go and it's sad how just about every law firm won't employ you if you are not 'white skinned'. Even when you are offered the job, you are made to work harder than your white colleagues and even when you do, it gets you nowhere. No one will address this issue because more than 99% of the practitioners are white, be it male or female. It's been a traumatic experience but I will continue to hold my head up and show them that I can do it and that I will make it."

Male, 26 - 35

"Sexual harassment and gender discrimination are common in law school too, both inside and outside the classrooms. There was a news story recently on a report into the problems at [university redacted] Law School. (The report is not hard to find on the web.) Not much seems to have been done about it - the Law School has just gone quiet. Maybe the management believes that if you ignore the problems, they'll go away. After all, that strategy worked so well for [employer redacted]..."

Female, 26 - 35

"I summer clerked, and practiced law, at one of the "big three" commercial law firms in Auckland. When I was a summer clerk, a partner tried to leave a work function with me. In my time at the firm, I know partners sexually harassed my peers, but I don't feel those are my stories to tell.

In all cases, we just shuddered and did what we could to forget about the incidents and make them go away. We bore the burden of these incidents alone, or with each other, knowing that if we told our superiors, or HR, we risked harming our reputation and professional futures. We knew the perpetrators would not be held to account.

For me, the hardest part of working at the firm was the daily discrimination I received from colleagues - because I am a strong, opinionated, independent feminist. One senior man in my team bullied me on a daily basis. He would make comments about my sexuality, my gender, my relationships, the way I spent my money, etc etc. He would deliberately say things to offend me, in order to get a rise. Eventually, I heard that a partner in my team thought it was my fault, because I shouldn't have

engaged with him. I was livid. This was bullying. This was harassment on the basis of my gender. And I got it from most of the men (both junior and senior) I encountered. Some of it was overt and explicit. A lot of it was "casual". There is an institutional hierarchy and culture propping up inherent female subservience and discrimination. Sexual harassment and sexual misconduct are symptoms of this problem.

I did not see a future for myself in law, under the current structure. I have since left the profession."
Female, 26 - 35

"I was wearing a below-the-knee-length black pencil skirt, which has a zip right up the back. I was showing my middle-aged white male client into a meeting room when he said "I'm going to unzip that, it's too tempting." I was shocked and kind of went into a stunned silence as I didn't know how to respond. What's worse is that my female managing partner, who was in the meeting room with us, just laughed along and made some comment implying that she agreed with him. I've never felt so self-conscious in my life."

Female, 18 - 25

"On being wined and dined by [employer redacted] for the summer clerk recruitment programme, the (then) HR Manager spoke to us openly about the selection process. We were told that with regard to Otago's male law students, "we tend to give them a bit of a break with their grades; they get a bit distracted down there." It is no wonder that when the boys got a head start to get into the firm, the gender imbalance and sense of entitlement was entrenched into the organisational culture."

Female, 36 - 45

Tuesday 3 April 2018

"Just to confirm sexual harassment has been going on for a long time. I was approached by a senior associate as a summer clerk at a Christchurch law firm about 15 years ago. I couldn't get over the fact he was married and acting like this! I had the distinct feeling the behaviour was usual and I was expected to play along. I didn't go back to that firm and knew there would be no future legal career for new female lawyers who were permanently employed there and wouldn't play the game."

Female, 36 - 45

"My experience in the legal profession has been senior white males who encourage you to drink alcohol without food, text and talk in an overly familiar and unprofessional manner (e.g. late at night and under the influence of alcohol), make comments on the appearance of other women and are physically affectionate towards female staff, none of which are acceptable."

Female, 18 - 25

"I was a partner in a large law firm. Sexual harassment was a regular issue. In response to a diversity programme, male lawyers set up 'The Prostate Club'. Several male partners assaulted and sexually harassed both female and male juniors. Many events were swept under the carpet by HR. Attempts to address the problems were short-lived and constantly criticised by partners and many staff as 'going too far'. The helpmates of sexual harassment were often female."

Female, 56 - 65

"I studied law and decided early on that the culture of the big corporate law firms was not something I wanted to be exposed to or involved in.

When I left Uni, I joined a government department, starting out in a more administrative role in Finance. This area was male-dominated. A male team leader in another team made me very uncomfortable. My team leader and a senior in my team described him as having a "crush" on me which I found to diminish how I was feeling as using the word "crush" made it seem innocent. I was 22, and he was in his 50s, married with kids. He was also in a much higher role.

He used to stare at me as I walked around the office, he would comment on what I was wearing and used to "accidentally" touch me. He also instant messaged me when I moved into a different area of the government department telling me he "missed me".

Still today I bump into him on occasion and feel absolutely sick at the sight of him. One of my biggest regrets is not complaining about him to HR or confronting his behaviour myself."

Female, 18 - 25

"I was terrorised by the partner I was assigned to for several years. I'm not going to write about the details as they are humiliating and identifying. I have since found a position in a different firm however I am looking to leave law in favour of a profession that doesn't reward and promote narcissistic sociopaths."

Female, 36 - 45

Sunday 1 April 2018

"I was sexually harassed in my workplace. A senior partner took me aside from the bar at a work function, gave me a drink and told me to skull it with him, then put his arm around my waist and leant into my neck, trying to kiss me. I know that I am not alone in this experience. Friends at the workplace told me this was not okay and should not be swept under the carpet, that I should feel comfortable reporting it to HR (so I did). However, they said that they too felt unsafe around this partner. They both cited this in their exit interviews with this workplace.

Later, legal staff from another team made jokes that they didn't have to bother learning our names, that we were all the same, blond summer clerks. Two of our male clerks, who looked far more alike

than any of us females did, were always referred to by individually by name. This shows a culture of disrespect of women.”

Female, 18 - 25

“I am about to graduate with first class honours in law and I have considered leaving the profession due to my experiences being sexually harassed. People are leaving because we feel we “can’t cut it”. But if making it as a young female lawyer involves an acknowledgment that you will likely be sexually harassed while in the profession, then why do we want to make it? I have only just convinced myself that I can still be a lawyer after all that.”

Female, 18 - 25

"It's not just lawyers who sexually harass and make lewd comments, it's also male clients, even old guys who think you should be keen for them and get hostile when you tell them they are out of line. They are disgusting."

Female, 18 - 25

"Every week the male lawyers at [employer redacted] go to Showgirls at lunchtime, which supports their culture of objectifying and groping women."

Female, 18 – 25

Saturday 31 March 2018

"The #metoo movement has made me angry beyond anything I expected, because I have taken pause and thought about all the incidences that have occurred over my time in this profession. And as I write this, so many feelings have surfaced. And the bad behaviour is not all from males, but it has been from those in power and it has all chipped away some of my sparkle.

At one job, the male partner, white, in his 60's revealed he was particularly pleased that he had hired me so he could ogle my breasts whenever he wanted and didn't have to wait for me to walk past his window each day.

At my first interview after qualifying as a lawyer, the two female partners asked me if I would go on a diet plan if they hired me so I would be more aesthetically pleasing.

At another job at our end of year Christmas function a white, male partner in his 40's thought it was funny to put his head between my breasts and “motorboat” me in front of my colleagues.

At this same job, I went to the HR manager over grossly inappropriate behaviour by another male, white, senior partner. I was told she wouldn't even raise the inappropriate behaviour because that's what men of his era did to be at the top of their game and they weren't going to change. She did

however offer me counselling to help me cope with the inappropriate behaviour that was standard in that firm.

At another job with a government department, I had to assist to remove a mentally challenged adult female out of an environment where she was being kept in depraved conditions and was being sexually abused. I had to disclose this to my manager, white, in his 50's. Later at Friday night drinks in front of other male staff he asked me to give more details of the sexual abuse because he wanted to write a book on erotica and he liked hearing about that sort of thing.

These are just a few examples. I am now working in a firm that although does have issues, I do feel safer."

Female, 36 - 45

"A [role of employee and employer redacted] was fired as a tutor from Law School for sexually harassing students."

Female, 26 - 35

"There is an annual law schools' sports camp for law students from most unis, apart from one. At this camp, women are harassed, drugged and got drunk so that male students can rape them. The idea is to get women out of law school - and some are traumatised and do drop out."

Female, 26 - 35

Friday 30 March 2018

"I am not a lawyer. It became clear to me when I was in law school that these attitudes and situations were the norm, and I wanted no part of it. Not because I wasn't strong, smart and up for a fight - but because it was one that was near impossible to win and had such a huge personal cost attached to it. It's said that Law schools in NZ have a high number of graduates who never even set foot in a law firm, and we were told it was because a law degree was 'useful in so many places' and so many other things. I can't really think of a single example we were given, however - other than working 'in-house'.

Law school really just felt like a conduit to one of the firms though. The education and socialisation we received, along with the meet-and-greets with the firms, the booths they had at university, events the sponsorship they gave the student unions - it was pervasive. I was part of the Honours programme right up until my final year. I was so disillusioned that I gave it up. My dean (who I liked and respected) tried very hard to talk me out of it, but when I asked him what was the use of it, the only thing this smart and articulate man could offer was 'it will make it easier to get your foot in the door in a big law firm.'

I write this because one of the questions asked in this forum was 'what can firms and universities do to make a change?' I don't know what Universities are like now, but speaking to my education, and my hopes for the future - I would want them to work hard on opening up the prospects and horizons

of students regarding their employment on leaving. If the law firms have to compete with other very attractive ideas of employment elsewhere - they may well have to lift their game.

That would be only one small part of the equation. One very important one is what this blog is doing - exposing the attitudes and saying we're not going to put up with it anymore."

Female, 36 - 45

Thursday 29 March 2018

"My experience relates to bullying by other female colleagues. It is so bad I seriously thought of folding my practice. It started over a fall out between our daughters - real high girls stuff. None of this would have occurred if I was a guy. It has been a campaign of emails and complaints none of them having any substance. They complain about the hours I keep, the emails I write, my clients it is silly stuff.

For me the ability for the NZLS to be able to be the watch dog but not protect its practitioners is part of the problem. We need an independent watch dog."

Female, 46 - 55

Wednesday 28 March 2018

"Such a brave and inspiring thing to attach your name to this blog and give a safe forum for law students, current and former lawyers to voice what creeps did to them.

I am shocked that Zoë and many others here sharing their horrific stories have been threatened. The fact that some people are trying to bully you into silence is cruel and undemocratic. Keep up your fantastic blog Zoë!

My heart goes out to all of you who have been creaped on and bullied."

Female, 18 - 25

"I recently left a "reputable" mid-sized firm after being subjected to intolerable bullying and sexual harassment. I can't bring myself to write about my experiences yet. I handed in my practicing certificate with a sigh of relief and vowed that I will never work in a law firm again."

Female, 46 - 55

"As a young law student I was doing work experience at a regional firm. This was during the Bill Cosby rape scandal. Every staff member made jokes about how Bill Cosby's victims were lying and laughed off the rape. Of course I couldn't say anything."

Female, 18 - 25

"I am not a lawyer and do not work in a law firm. I do work in the NZ public service.

I don't want to take away from the lawyer's here but I really hope someone starts an anonymous blog for Government employees who are also subject to all of these behaviours.

Workplace bullying is endemic, is destroying and disadvantaging careers, ruining people's mental health and in one instance a man some years ago committed suicide when he was relentlessly bullied by a government department. That department went very quiet about it.

I have been subjected to several episodes of bullying - by both men and women managers as well as collusion to remove my work responsibilities from me. I have also put up with sexual harassment by a male manager. But the bullying is by far the worst aspect of the public service.

Everything that happens to us needs to come out in the open at this point and these people need to be held to account."

Female, 46 - 55

Tuesday 27 March 2018

"I experienced sexual harassment throughout my career as a lawyer in government. When my marriage broke up I was given as a giant condom for my secret Santa at work with a note saying "your New Year's party kit". When I complained I received bullying in my workplace and I pushed for my boss to do something about it. It turned out it was the union rep in our legal team. He was made to apologise and I was made out to be a trouble maker.

In another government agency I was asked by a male colleague after I had mentioned I had a date the night before if I had done the walk of shame home with my heels in my hand. I said it was inappropriate and he replied that I loved it.

I have been accosted in the lift at the district court with a fellow lawyer telling me I looked hot and reaching to stroke my hair.

I have had a senior government official tell me "not to worry my pretty little face about it" and a member of his legal team calling me a bitch and making derogatory comments about me to a fellow lawyer because enforcement action was taken against his agency.

I have had male lawyers bully me and complain that I bullied their client through them because I would not let them push me around.

I had a female lawyer, bully me and tell me to withdraw my sentencing submissions and file new ones because she did not like what they said. She then bullied me in front of the Judge and mentioned discussions we had about the case in phone calls during the course of sentencing suggesting that I had a vendetta against her client.

I have had comments about my legs and breasts and was told that the person had spied my tattoos on my back while they were standing above me on the mezzanine floor at work and it turned them on."

Female, 36 - 45

"In my second interview with [employer redacted], the two interviewers brought the employment partner (I don't work in employment law) and the receptionist into the room at one point. The original partner interviewing me then asked me when I was planning on having children. The partner explained that he had four children, but that it would be difficult for him if I were to have children after beginning a role with them. The four interviewers waited and studied me while I tried to come up with a response. The situation left me disheartened at an early stage in my career about the assumptions that are placed on different genders and how those assumptions and viewpoints (as well as outright discrimination) affect peoples' futures.

At the time, I wanted to make a complaint to the law society, but I was generally warned that it would affect my career and may not achieve much.

I don't want to be part of a legal profession where people in or around the industry feel that they cannot make complaints or that they will not be listened to and taken seriously. I don't want to work in an industry that tolerates the type of conduct that has been raised on this blog. It has to change!"

Female, 26 - 35

"I have worked in-house in corporates and government and in a major firm in just about every legal environment, and have seen and experienced bullying and sexual harassment from all angles, directed to both men and women, but mostly women. I have been the subject of it, been engaged in informal action (such as being present in a space to deflect an abuser) to protect other women from it, and witnessed a woman complain about it - and then sadly watched her career tank.

As a young lawyer I deflected continuing unwanted requests for sex from a senior man in situations where I was alone with that man, often in an unfamiliar city. In my next job I put up with constant comments about how I looked and whether I was wearing high enough heels or short enough skirts. In a major firm I watched younger woman being taken out with senior men as bait to client events and being described as such, in that same firm I became involved in underground efforts to protect another woman from her harasser by constantly being in the same space when he was there, at one Christmas event my secret Santa gift was a sex toy that I opened in front of the almost completely male table of older men all giggling and waiting to see my reaction, at one drinking event I witnessed a senior woman start a conversation with a group of summer clerks by asking who was a virgin, I was frequently encouraged to flirt with clients and encouraged to stay out drinking with them.

I have heard young men and women discussed like pieces of meat. I have sat in meetings where rape jokes were made, and have received a leaving card full of obscenities relating to my body. The list goes on and on and on.

I have worked my guts out in this profession and while some people have been great, on balance I would liken my experience of the working culture within the profession to a war zone. I am caregiver to girls now. I am afraid to say I would never suggest they go into the law. While I am not crushed by my experiences, I am tired, angry and hardened. As a young person it was so dispiriting to think while you were working hard to impress with your brain, your breasts or legs were the real focus. As a middle age woman, it is equally frustrating to be dismissed as a moaner or a bitch because you are no longer a visual commodity. It's not what I want for my girls."

Female, 36 - 45

"I am speaking on behalf of a close friend who was a victim of the Russell McVeagh assaults. A huge concern for my friend is that the independent review will be an echo chamber of Russell McVeagh's own opinions and spin if employees who have suffered or witnessed this kind of behaviour don't speak out. This review should be an opportunity for those voices to be heard.

If you are a past or present employee of Russell McVeagh and would like to provide information as part of this review please phone 0800.779.779 or email ereview@rmcvexternal.com. This phone number and email address is managed by Dame Margaret Bazley and the two female lawyers, Jill Atkinson and Julia Spelman, who are undertaking the review."

Female, 18 - 25

"As someone who was sexually assaulted, reported it to the police, and managed to go to trial (after much difficulty)...No-one wants to go through New Zealand's criminal justice system. I was lucky in the sense that I was a law student at the time and had access to so much support. There is nothing so traumatising as being cross-examined by a defence lawyer who insinuates that "you simply just forgot that it happened", calls you a liar and questions your sexual history. While I respect that defence lawyers are doing their job and their duty to the Court, I would never wish for anyone to go through the system.

It is incredibly disheartening when you know that your friends are making sexual harassment complaints against their employer (in the legal industry), and that they're most likely going to leave regardless of the outcome. The perpetrators have been men in higher positions. My friends are tired - they just want to leave. I don't blame them."

Female, 18 - 25

"When I was about 21 and in law school I spent some time working in summer with a well-known, senior barrister. I accompanied him on one trial when he had another lawyer assisting him as well. That lawyer made me feel extremely uncomfortable. One day I wore my hair in plaits and he leered at me saying he really liked my "piggy tails." On another day, he commented that he could see my breasts as my top was low cut. He also asked me if I had a boyfriend. He was at least 20 years older than me. I felt unsafe by the way he looked at me and spoke to me. I had to avoid being alone with him, and couldn't concentrate on learning from watching the trial. I was too embarrassed to say anything to

the senior barrister, who was completely unaware of the situation. I didn't want to distract him from his trial. I was only working for him on an informal basis and I didn't want to make things awkward.

Thankfully, I now work for an extremely supportive large firm. I specialise in criminal law. My bosses are male and would not tolerate any inappropriate behaviour in the workplace. I do criminal defence work, and my clients are almost always male. When I began, I expected that I'd experience some sexual harassment from the clients as I was young and female. With only one exception, they have never made inappropriate comments to me and are very respectful. In addition, both my clients and my bosses have never made me feel like I'm a less competent lawyer because I'm female."

Female, 26 - 35

"When I was a young, 24 year old, first year solicitor, I worked with a very attractive, aggressive, female partner. She was in her 40s. I think she was married. I know she had kids. She was ambitious and was not yet an equity partner.

This partner and I worked together on a big case. We worked long hours and she was incredibly demanding. Documents needed to be re-written urgently and research done immediately. I was extremely stressed at the time and many times swore that I would never become her. On a number of occasions she told me that her sex life wasn't as active as she'd like. I thought that was a strange thing to share but didn't think too much more of it.

One evening, we broke for dinner and went to a restaurant downstairs. Immediately she turned the conversation to sex and she asked me if I had been with an older woman. I said I hadn't - which seemed to intrigue her. Not long after, she came back from the bathroom, sat down next to me and straight away placed her hand on my crotch. Soon after, she told me what she wanted to do to me in the disabled bathroom. Soon after that, she took me by the hand and we did 90% of what she had described.

At the time, I thought it was absolutely awesome. But now I wonder whether she took advantage of her position of power over me? I also wonder whether she chose me to work on the case just to shag me? The more I think about it, the more I think she used me. I'd be interested to know the views of others."

Male, 36 - 45

"I was raped and they had a video of them doing it. 2 years later I am still trying to have it removed from the website that they uploaded it to. My lawyer says I can do nothing about getting it removed as they did not name me and have blurred all faces."

Female, 18 - 25

"There are lawyers who think the law applies to everyone else, but they are above it. Accompanying that is a power trip in which they despise anyone who points out or complains about their conduct - and they can be very vindictive. Keep up the good work."

Male, 56 - 65

"I am massively disturbed that Ms Lawton is subject to threats for having this site. Truth is not evil so should be encouraged. The legal fraternity is under substantial attacks for its behaviour from the wider public. Trying to 'gag' people from telling the truth will only help plunge this profession deeper into a business without honour. I have little trust in the integrity of this field already, having a mafia like reaction to this blog should worry all New Zealanders."

Male 56 - 65

"It might be 2018 but it seems "black listing" is still as popular as it was 20 years ago when I fell victim to similar attempts.

In my final year at Law School I participated in a recruitment programme facilitated by the Law School on conjunction with the participating firms. As an honours student, I had landed interviews with several law firms. Most of the interviews were fair and stock standard stuff. One however, stood out for the sheer volume of sexist questions asked. Female interviewees were subjected to protracted questioning on our love life, relationships and the job prospects of our partners (if we had one) to the point where I felt that the person they really wanted to interview was not actually in the room. Male interviewees? What sports do you play? What societies are you a member of?

It was enough for me to lay a complaint with the Law School (ah, so young and foolish). To outward appearances the Law School seemed to take it seriously. They 'kindly' gave the senior partner who was the key offender details about the nature of my complaint – as well as my name. Of course he denied it vigorously, promptly offered a job to a fellow female student (who ironically was on the verge of laying a complaint herself) and, other than the formal letter from the Law School advising me of his response, nothing seemingly happened.

About a year later I chanced to meet at the local supermarket a law student who was studying a year or two behind me. She told me she had taken a summer law clerk position locally. She also told me she now knew all about my complaint to the Law School because the partner looking after them (yes him again) had told all the summer clerks about it, including how he had taken steps to ensure that I (yes, he named me) was blacklisted and would never work in law. I was stunned to hear this (and thankful his reach didn't extend to the barrister who employed me) as I was no threat to him and my complaint had cost him nothing – his firm was obviously still involved with the Law School.

So what was the real purpose of his message? To ensure that every summer law clerk understood that to complain is to end your career. A culture of silence doesn't just happen, it's deliberately cultivated.

I am also somewhat sceptical about the ability of the NZ Law Society to appropriately deal with complaints given my experience with the Auckland branch. In my experience, the Society has greater interest in protecting its most senior members as opposed to the most vulnerable.

Eleven years ago I was working at a small law firm in Auckland. It's fair to say I was not enjoying

working at that firm for a number of reasons, but the tipping point to considering alternative employment options came when I discovered one of the Partners had been negligent in his work causing difficulties for a client. Long story short, I was not satisfied that the partner was sufficiently upfront with his client about his role and this prompted me to mull over alternative employment options.

As other suitable law firms weren't plentiful where I was living, I toyed with the idea of practicing on my own account. Not sure if that was what I really wanted to do, I enrolled in and paid for the "Flying Start" Programme (as it was then called) run by the Law Society. This programme, which was compulsory for all law practitioners who wished to become partners or sole practitioners, was run entirely outside of work hours.

Shortly after I completed the course, another partner at the firm where I was working advised me she had been contacted by a friend of hers who worked at the Law Society to tell her that I had just completed the "Flying Start" programme and that, as a result, my employment was now terminated. Ironically, when my employment was terminated I still hadn't made up my mind whether to become a sole practitioner or not.

I know that my termination was contrary to employment law and I could have brought a claim, but if a "leak" from the Law Society had cost me my job, what would a legal claim against a firm do for my career as a whole? When your life's work is on the line, silence is golden.

Yes, these incidents happened quite some time ago but there has been nothing I've seen to suggest that in 2018 it's a changed profession, quite the contrary. So whenever I hear a law firm partner, law school dean or law society member say yet again, "We didn't know", I call BS. They know all right but protecting the select few at the top is the priority."

Female, 46 - 55

"I worked in the litigation team of a well-known Tauranga firm at the start of my career. The senior partner in that team was well known as having made sexual advances on his junior female solicitors.

During a client dinner to celebrate a large win, the senior partner placed his hand on my upper thigh under the table and asked me if that was ok. I told him that it was not at all ok. I couldn't leave altogether given it was a client function, so had to stay for the remainder of a very uncomfortable evening.

After that incident I noticed a decrease of work received from that senior partner. However, as I was also working with two other junior partners, it did not impact my overall productivity."

Female, 36 - 45

"In 1978 I began working for Barristers & Solicitors in Tauranga. I was an incredibly naive and ignorant girl and felt that my bosses (employers) who were all called Mr (no lady solicitors in my firm then), could make a difference if I worked or didn't work. So I kept quiet and made sure I never got into

situations again that left me trapped in the Deeds room with the company accountant.

I moved to Auckland in 1981 (to the "big smoke") as most young people set off in the world. By then I was 21. My experiences until 1987 were fine. In 1984 I joined a firm in South Auckland [employer redacted]. Later it would be changed to [employer redacted]).

I was subjected to sexual advances and comments virtually from the beginning, but again I didn't want to lose my job so kept avoiding those solicitors in isolation. In the end it affected me mentally. I became nervous and anxious and to this day when I was working in other law firms, I could have complete breakdowns just from what those bastards did to me. I was going through (in 1987-88) marriage hassles and this was used against me.

[1st Manager's name redacted] would pointedly remark about my moods as "women's issues". But the real kicker was [2nd Manager's name redacted] who forced himself on me in his office one day while I was filing. His wife was working in an office 2 doors away. I fled the office, saying I felt sick and went home. My doctor put me on anti-depressants because I was blaming myself for what happened. Then [3rd Manager's name redacted] fired me although they called it re-structuring. I went to the union for help and was laughed at. [Employer redacted] had made arrangements for those women being laid off to basically get no redundancy, no notice and no help from the union.

Now decades later I wonder if we were all being "targeted" by these bastards sexually and they were cleaning up the office. [2nd Manager's name redacted] left the firm for another in Auckland city just prior to this. He took with him his secretary who he had moved in with and I called him to ask him for help in being fired. Wouldn't even speak to me. Was unavailable I kept being told. I had done nothing wrong ever and here I was being told on a Thursday that there was no more work for me from Monday. They cited the economic crash which had occurred a month before.

I know what occurred to me is not isolated and it has mentally affected me for ever. These solicitors are all old guys now but the attitude of male lawyers has been that the women in their firms are there for their pleasure and if they don't comply, they are out the door. Or they didn't get promoted."

Female, 56 - 65

"I have worked as a legal secretary for most of my working life. Memorable moments were tempting for a large Wellington Government department for the legal division and being yelled at by a young female solicitor because she misplaced a file and thought that I had taken it. She later came out to me and apologised for overreacting and said "sorry but I am having a really bad period at the moment". Yes period, the period that females get monthly!!!

Another time I temped for a lady barrister who became a QC who is now a judge. It was raining heavily one day and she had gone out somewhere and when she returned she put her wet handbag and umbrella on a bench while she took her coat off. She then took the handbag and umbrella and put them away in the cupboard. About 5 minutes later she came out with a handful of papers and put them on the bench right where there was a pool of water. She started on at me that I should not leave water on the bench. She got really nasty with me and I felt humiliated. She went back to her office

and I stood there and thought about how she had just treated me so I went into her office and said to her who did she think she was speaking to me like that and I wasn't putting up with it and that I was going home (this was about 2pm). She said you can't do that and I said yes I can because I actually work for myself not a temp agency. Her whole attitude changed and she was very apologetic and pleaded with me to stay because she had to get very important documents filed at court that afternoon. So I stayed but didn't go back the next day. What a cow she was.

I watched other secretaries be picked on by the partners that they work for that the secretaries have resigned.

I've temped for the Chairman of a large law firm in Wellington who acted like a child having a tantrum because he dictated a short letter and thought that he had uploaded it to the server so that I could transcribe it. But he hadn't done it correctly. He came out of his office and said have you got it yet? I said no and he made out it was my fault. He got really shitty and kicked his briefcase so hard that it flew across the room. What a dick!"

Female, 56 - 65

"I worked for a well-known sole practitioner in [location redacted due to small size of town]. He was intelligent and well-respected professionally. There were many positives working for him. The downside was the ceaseless sleazy comments. Whatever the topic, whatever the phrase an employee used, he would twist it into something sleazy, a double entendre, a sexual innuendo, something suggestive, a comment on a staff member's sex life. Most of the lawyers and all the support staff were female. We were all expected to laugh along, though clearly, several of us were very uncomfortable. It was mentally exhausting to cope with on top of trying to do the job well."

Female, 46 - 55

"I don't have a submission - but I want to encourage you all to speak up. Let 2018 be the year that this kind of thing is stomped out for good. NEVER EVER stay silent."

Female, 26 - 35

"My friend was sexually assaulted by another woman in the workplace, this woman thought it would be funny to walk up to her and grab her vagina, not cup, not touch, not brush but grab her pelvic bone and squeeze. My friend reported this to her employer and her employer immediately put the victim on garden leave. My friend's husband who also worked in the same workplace was also put on garden leave. The perpetrator was not put on leave.

During the time they were both away from the workplace, the perpetrator was given a promotion.

Not long after this a formal complaint was made about the victim's husband by a large number of friends of the perpetrator, they were saying that they felt unsafe with him in the workplace and said they had witnessed violence - none of this could be corroborated by an independent witness. He was called into a formal hearing and promptly dismissed. One of the complaint statements outlined an

incident by a staff member. The complainant was not at work on the day they alleged there was an incident. But it was used anyway.

My friend had an ERA meeting, the company offered her a confidential agreement which she took just to make it stop. Her husband was also offered a confidential agreement for unfair dismissal.

On the day of this meeting I turned up for work (at the same workplace) and witnessed the perpetrator grabbing another woman by the vagina. I made a formal complaint and was told I would be put on leave while they investigated. I resigned that day. To my knowledge that complaint was never followed up on.

Almost 2 years later I am still unable to work full time, that workplace caused my mental health to collapse. I am a mentally strong person and my experiences in that workplace have turned me into a negative vulnerable person. My friend is in a similar state and has move out of region to escape it. The bullying and the nepotism is rife and the hiring practices aren't much better.

That SOE (or any other business, CG or LG) should not be allowed to have the option to pay people out for sexual assault. This allows them to keep it quiet, this allows them to not have this behaviour in their workplace recorded.

The victims are regarded as troublesome by ERA if they insist on it being heard by the authority.

For sexual misconduct cases, they need to be heard (and not penalised for refusing a pay-out) otherwise how are we going to know just how prevalent it is and how are the innocent going to prove themselves?"

Female, 46 - 55

"Bullying rampant at [employer redacted] in Wellington by Senior Partner [name redacted]. Saw him reduce women interns and law clerks to tears with his bullying. Said to one young woman she was too fat to wear that top and then said to the rest of the office that he didn't want to see her fat belly. Would humiliate staff in front of other staff who would be too scared to tell him not to do so they would laugh along with him in fear of being targeted. Refused to let staff go on leave. Would go out to the toilets to wait for staff to come out, not sure if he was checking they were actually in there or if he just thought he would start barking orders out and not wait for them to return to desk. Nasty place to work. I resigned with no alternative work lined up as I could no longer stay in that environment as I was getting sick from the stress. Huge staff turnover by those that get bullied and he sets the benchmark for other partners and lawyers in how they treat staff."

Female, 46 - 55

"When I was 19 I began my first full time job at a national law firm doing administration. We had a dress up Christmas party and had pre drinks til about 7pm. During that time we stood in groups chatting and I happened to be chatting with one of the partners and 2 others. While discussing my costume he reached over and grabbed the zip which was over my bust and started pulling it down - in

broad daylight in a party full of people! I stepped away and the conversation continued. I felt violated and on Monday following the party spoke to the HR manager. I said I didn't want to make an issue of it but wanted to make it known as I thought it was inappropriate.

As soon as I got back to my desk I received an email from one of the managing partners asking me to meet him in a meeting room. He made plenty of excuses for his colleague's behaviour and tried to sweep it under the carpet. He said "I'm sure he only meant it as a friendly thing". I thought, he pulled down the zip where my breasts are! What if I had pulled down the zip on his pants?

During my time at the firm I heard lots of stories about him that dated back to the 80s. I saw grads come into the firm and heard about experiences they had.

As my time continued at the firm, I avoided the partner concerned like the plague. 10 years on, me confident in a different career path, I saw him at an event with his arm around a younger lady I knew (not his partner, just an acquaintance) joking away and with a wandering arm near the small of her back. Fear ran through me and I was a violated 19 year old again.

I still struggle to write this now, editing details for fear I will be identified. I don't know why as I am not even in law any more. At the time family and friends told me if I talked that would be the end of my job at the firm. It is he who should be identified and shamed. Thank you Zoë and everyone who is giving us the strength to have a voice."

Female, 26 - 35

"As an in-house lawyer, I am not immune to the bullying behaviour of entitled senior male law firm partners. They think nothing of going behind my back to my CE, my board etc - they actively engage in boys club "networking" in undermining me, constantly. They still feel entitled to be instructed by me, demanding explanations of why they're not getting more work, while at the same time speaking down to me, objectifying me in meetings and back stabbing me.

Ironically, the firm who is the worst offender [employer redacted], is a firm I declined an offer from because of sexist and objectifying comments in my interview with them for a summer clerk role.

The sense of entitlement and arrogant attitude no doubt means they would deny they bully women, which only further reinforces how low their opinion of women (internally and externally) is."

Female, 26 - 35

"I summer clerked at [employer redacted] in Wellington in the summer of 2004 to 2005. A boat was hired for a Christmas party. There was a very old and senior named partner of the firm who was renowned for being a creep. He pulled up my dress in front of the entire assembled party and said "show us your g string". I was offered an apology the next day by other partners (not him), but funnily enough my application for a permanent job was rejected.

However, I did enjoy a career at [employer redacted] in Auckland after that where to be fair, in the

banking group, the male partners were good to work for and promoted women etc, it wasn't an issue for me at [employer redacted]".

Female, 36 - 46

"Kia ora

I know of the incidents that occurred at [employer redacted] over a decade ago - I was a recipient of one of their scholarships they offered to Māori students during our undergrad years. I wasn't witness to the partying or drinking behaviour at the seminars or talks held where students were invited. I just knew of the senior partner who instigated those evenings, organised the drinking sessions afterwards and I knew the women who had sex in the boardroom with that partner had spoken to lecturers (women) the next day/s about what happened.

Actually, everyone knew who he was. I went on to work in Wellington immediately after this incident and the lecturers involved had be silenced by [employer redacted]'s HR & comms machines and by their own Faculty at the University. So they took their emails and sent a letter which was forwarded on (social media wasn't a thing then) that reached ex law students whether legal professional, public servant or private practice that were part of the University's network of ex-students etc. It reached wider as people realised the seriousness of the events.

The protection of the women involved though has always been maintained. I don't even know who they were and it would be hard to guess, that's how good the lecturers were at keeping them safe. That partner involved is a very high visibility powerful public figure now and he is the type of person that would strike back if threatened with a leak or action against him now, no matter who or how he would do it, it's just his manner and he has a hell of a lot to lose."

Female, 46 - 55

"I suffered bullying and intimidation at the hands of a senior male partner in a well- known law firm. While it was not sexual in nature I strongly believe it was because I was a woman, worked part-time and therefore didn't fit the ideal of a good lawyer. I was fired without notice, without any kind of performance management and the rest of the partners, including the women did nothing despite knowing it was wrong. I was paid to keep quiet. He is well known for treating people badly and people don't stay long in his team."

Female, 36 - 45

"Qualified as a legal executive. Went to a recommended consultant who said my C.V. was crap and that I'd never get a job like that. Landed a job after 8 months post-graduation, thought it was the perfect role. From day one, no support, training or direction from principal, left my 2 colleagues to do it all. Said 'it's best to learn hands on'. Never available to staff and blamed everyone else for everything, was threatened with dismissal when things went wrong, even when I had asked for help and the principal was the one doing distributions. Copped abusive clients screaming at me due to lack

of principal communication. They screamed and cried when colleagues resigned, then promptly slagged them off. Asked me to work ultra viries.

After all this, refused to sign off my registration. I lasted just over 3 years before burning out and getting sick. I worked so hard but not sure if I will go back to law, and I am left wondering what to do now. It's been over a year now."

Female, 36 - 45

Monday 26 March 2018

"I was told by a Senior Partner at [employer redacted] (as it was known then) that he didn't take women lawyers seriously unless they were wearing high heels. Apparently it was unprofessional to wear anything else. I was a grad wearing sneakers at the time having just run urgent documents up to the High Court."

Female, 26 - 35

"My first job after graduation was in a national law firm. It soon became clear to me that although there was a group of us and we were all in a graduate programme everything depended on your relationship with your supervising partner - what kind of work you got, what experience you had, what you learnt. We were like plants: those of us that got looked after were given work and supervision and flourished; those that were ignored, withered and died.

My supervising partner was charismatic and compelling. He gave me interesting work and paid me a great deal of attention. He was interested in my development and said he wanted to be my mentor. I admired him greatly and was very impressed. He was supportive and helpful. He took me into his confidence and gave me advice. I felt I was being groomed for success.

Unfortunately that wasn't the only grooming going on.

He also constantly hit on me, starting off so subtly it was barely detectable and gradually building the pressure. It was like a drip on a stone, inconsequential initially, but incessant and eventually damaging. I was alternately confused, distressed, flattered, exhilarated, distracted, anxious.

I was also young and naive and thought I was strong enough to handle the situation and come through unscathed. I was committed to my career and wanted the mentoring on offer, and I genuinely really liked working with him. It was a really messy, complicated couple of years and I was lucky it didn't end up seriously screwing up my life and career.

After a couple of years I left the firm and went on to have a successful career in another domain, never returning to private practice.

Looking back 25 years later I see it all very differently. I shouldn't have had to deal with that in my first professional job. Why did he feel entitled to mess with my head in that way? To mix up the personal

and professional in that way when there was such a disparity in our positions? When I was clearly not seeking that kind of contact with him and he should not have been seeking it. Why were there no structures in place, no supports in the firm to avoid this or help me address the situation without tanking my career. Did the firm have sexual harassment policies? Why were we new graduates each so dependent on the relationship with one senior partner?"

Female, 46 - 55

"My boss stifles any disagreement by verbally attacking anyone who questions his decisions or holds a different point of view. He holds grudges and forces people out of their jobs by making life difficult for them. Multiple employees have left due to his conduct. He didn't like the results of a staff bullying and harassment survey so pretended it didn't happen, refused to tell anyone the outcome, and reissued it with different questions. Anyone who whistle blows knows they will lose their job. He has worked in the legal profession for years and is well known."

Female, 36 - 45

Sunday 25 March 2018

"And to add to my comment below to the president of the Law Society - we deserve to be treated with respect whether we are drunk or not. Sorry, I'm just so angry that this victim blaming is still around in 2018!"

Female, 26 - 35

"I've been the subject of severe bullying by my previous employers and also the subject of sexual harassment and bullying by other counsel. I have been extremely disappointed by the Law Society's weak reaction and, on occasions, victim blaming.

When the first story broke in February this year, the president of the law society spoke about how young women need to drink less alcohol at social functions (!). The steps so far have focused almost entirely on how victims can protect themselves.

With respect, Ma'am:

1. All the bullying and sexual harassment occurred when I was sober (and indeed, fully clothed) - as it was with others on this blog;
2. That sort of comment from someone representing my profession is like being abused all over again.

You are meant to be supporting us and helping to fix the situation, not making it worse.

The underwhelming reaction of the Law Society has made me contemplate leaving the law. I love helping clients achieve a good outcome and helping stand up for those who have no voice but I am struggling in the profession's toxic culture and unless something changes drastically the Law Society will continue to support that culture. And I have many friends who feel the same way.

Ma'am I suggest you read the Chief Justice' system response to the survey that found Judges have been bullying counsel. That is how you respond to allegations without victim blaming.

Also thanks Zoë Lawton and Olivia Wensley and Steph Dhyrberg for speaking out, and to the Minister of Justice for taking this matter seriously."

Female, 26 - 35

Saturday 24 March 2018

"I am now residing in Australia. Before my move, I worked in an Auckland small size practice. The firm was financially unstable and would "employ" vulnerable immigrants with "no pay basis."

The immigrant worker was vulnerable and willing to be exploited in order to gain some experience to be "employable in the future" and the employer was willing to do that to facilitate the exchange. That went on for a year. The cycle would just repeat itself from time to time.

It was dishearten to see how someone who is supposed to uphold the law to end up exploit and misuse the law."

Male, 26 - 35

"My experience in law and patent attorney firms brings very much truth to the saying "power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely".

It's human nature, and more psychologists need to have a voice in this discussion to get to the underlying causes of harassment, bullying, etc in these firms - identity that, then fix it.

Until recently the only way to register as a patent attorney in NZ was to pass exams written by senior attorneys/partners who have no experience in writing exam papers (bar some perhaps having lecturing experience and know how to write good questions).

The exam writers and markers and any tutoring is done by other patent attorneys for free so are treated as if they are doing you personally a huge favour (mentoring was my main goal of working there, and yes I expected it and expected it to be top notch yet felt very let down by my main supervisor).

Exam papers are given back to candidates with no marks given per question, no ticks (as this would open up arguments over how right or wrong the answer you have was) so absolutely no idea how they arrived at the mark.

The fact tutors and the exam board do it for free means they hold ZERO accountability for their performance. Never has feedback been sought on how trainees find the process. We are at the bottom of the heap and it's expected that we be treated as such.

Everyone's fine earning their stripes - so long as it's clear what is to be expected. At the end of the day I felt like the dog in the learned helplessness experiment where he is shocked repetitively despite trying all 'botton/ levers ' to stop it. Eventually the dog lies down and accepts the shocks having learnt he is helpless.

Exam prep, marking, tutoring 'for free' is also a misnomer as it would be a first thing to bring up in a performance review of the 'volunteer ' so they get paid in career progression, worth far more than a few dollar an hour.

The competitive environment also leads some (very few in my experience) to have motivations that may not be best for your own career - mentoring and tutoring shouldn't be done by those who are easily threatened and perhaps have insecurities that cause them to take pleasure in colleagues failings.

They control the supply of new patent attorneys exclusively. Calling out any behaviour of partners is a sure way to be exited from the profession."

Female, 26 - 35

"When I was working for a sole practitioner in my first year of practice, he took me up to Masterton to junior on a JAT with him. At the hotel, while I was looking for my room card in my bag he suggested I come and put the bag down in his room and look for it in there. I did, and sat down on the bed to look for it. He asked me how to work the tv (he was much older than me) and I showed him. He then lay down on the other side of the bed and pulled me down next to him. I was too frightened to do anything until he pulled my arm over his body and started stroking my hair and telling me how beautiful I was. I felt like I was frozen for a few seconds and then I said I had to go and I ran out of the room.

I felt sick after that and I quit my job a month later. I felt so stupid after it happened, like I had somehow allowed it to happen by being so naive and going into his room.

I'm glad things like this are being brought to light. Old, male practitioners shouldn't feel like they have the power to do whatever they want to women and get away with it. I thought long and hard about whether I wanted to do anything, but then his career is almost over and mine is just starting. I'm afraid of the backlash, and I shouldn't have to be."

Female, 26 - 35

Friday 23 March 2018

"I've worked in four law firms and in three of the four law firms I have experienced sexual innuendo from the most senior male lawyers. One would tell me in an exaggerated way how he hit long and hard in the weekend at rugby and other creepy things like that. He was a short, fat, pig of a man who I found creepy. One of my other bosses was discovered to be chatting an innocent, sweet, beautiful

19 year old girl throughout work. It all came out one day when she walked over to his desk, threw a bunny outfit (an actual onesie, she was really innocent) over him in front of the entire office and declared that that was the bunny outfit she had that he had kept asking her about over a chat. Another kept booking my buddy to go away on work trips for weeks at a time and she would complain to me that he would turn up at her hotel room at 10pm wanting to talk. I never knew if anything happened but he was so fat and repulsive it must have made her feel so sick.

Equally, I think a lot of female to female bullying happens in law. I know some workplaces to be terrible and it's not just because it's a woman and not a man. Law can be the cliquiest, bitchiest profession I've ever seen where some women have the arrogance to think that they've got the right to bully others out of the law, like they have some kind of right to decide who should serve law and who shouldn't. It's arrogant entitlement at its finest."

Female, 26 - 35

Thursday 22 March 2018

"My experience ranges from small but insidious things - like emails that begin with "Dear Gents and [insert my obviously female name]" - that draw attention to the fact that I am the often the only woman in the room. To networking functions where a group of senior men have joked about how much money I would make if I offered to have sex with every man I know. To being told that I "get more credit than I deserve" because I am confident and "earn people's trust without trying" - feedback that would never be given to a man.

It's rare for me to suffer sexual harassment, but conduct that is gendered, demeaning and confidence-bruising is frequent enough. The vast majority of men that I work with are wonderful people, and many of them are shocked at what they're learning about the behaviour women are subjected to. I hope that we can all get better at calling this type of behaviour out, for ourselves and each other."

Female, 26 - 35

Wednesday 21 March 2018

"When I was at [university redacted] in 2012 I participated in jelly wrestling at law camp. This was organised by the male leaders of [university students association redacted]. The jelly wrestling was for females only. I participated because I wanted to be seen as cool and popular but now I am disgusted by my actions. How dare the 'boys' (certainly not real men) think it's cool to encourage this behaviour so they can watch for their pleasure and then gossip about it later? I would never do this again and would stand up to the males. This kind of activity exploiting females should be banned. I hope [university students association redacted] has reigned it in and there is now 50/50 gender representation on the exec. Males shouldn't dominate uni execs as bad things happen and they perpetuate their lewd culture."

Female, 26 - 35

"My firm targeted me and bullied me to the point where they denied the workplace was stressful and giving me anxiety. They were financially struggling and targeted me as the most junior lawyer. All their frustrations were taken out on me and I had no option but to engage an employment lawyer to negotiate me an exit and pay-out. Unfortunately since I have left, my firm has decided to target other staff members because they have mental health issues. They do not acknowledge that they are to blame, and they continue to act unlawfully. Lawyers are terrible employers and after the whole experience I'm done with the industry. Never going back."

Female, 26 - 35

"My boyfriend works for a law firm where there is a lawyer who slaps girls asses. The lawyer makes too much money to be let go. I don't reckon other men would say anything as their career progression is too important."

Female, 18 - 25

"I worked for a firm where the partner used to be inappropriate towards female PAs but never female lawyers. He got to keep his job. Should have been booted out but of course he's bringing in most of the income. He also had an attitude and would sometimes ignore the female staff. Other times say inappropriate stuff to us. Always felt super awkward being a younger lawyer. He once asked why I wasn't dating a rugby player because I was dating a professional and that wasn't 'my type'."

Female, 26 - 35

Tuesday 20 March 2018

"Working at a law firm I witnessed male and female staff members openly referring to a women with red hair as Clifford (the big red dog from the children's books) and pasting images from the book around the office. Nothing was done by the female partners who dominated the floor to stop it.

On the other hand, I was the only male in a team of 13 run by a female partner and was commended for lasting the longest out of any male who had been put in her team, and that was only 6 months before I just about broke down and another partner offered to help me change teams before leaving law as a profession. Interestingly, the response from an independent employment lawyer was to suck it up because if I said a word the firm I worked for would make sure I never worked in law in NZ again.

I have been shocked by the fact that the general public thinks the recent revelations are a surprise. Apparently it was even worse before my time."

Male, 36 - 45

"I have seen a number of comments on this blog from (mainly) younger females claiming that senior female colleagues have been bullying them and making their life at work difficult and/or claiming that their seniors are sociopaths.

I strongly encourage those women to think carefully about their senior's approach, and whether their reaction would be different if it was a senior male behaving in the same way.

Senior women are often put in a very difficult position where they are expected by their peers and seniors to supervise in a direct, authoritarian and non-emotive manner (i.e. business-like) and in my experience this is usually the most effective in a law firm environment. However, because they are female some juniors expect that they will act in a highly compassionate, caring and comforting manner towards them (akin to mothering). For some people, if a woman behaves in a direct and authoritarian manner they see it as b*tchy and bullying. For others, if a woman is not direct and assertive they will see them as weak and not follow their instructions. It comes from society's entrenched views of what is 'female' and what is 'male' and it can place senior women in a very difficult bind.

I encourage young lawyers to change their mindset around this - if your senior is spending the time trying to teach you then she is trying to help you grow your skills and career. Not everyone is perfect in their approach, but most people don't set out every morning with the intention of being mean to their colleagues - they're just trying to get the job done in the most efficient way possible while juggling a number of other workplace pressures.

We need to openly recognise the very different challenges women face in succeeding in senior leadership roles. Junior staff reacting in this way is one of them. Help your senior women, don't try to tear them down and undermine them, and I guarantee the majority of them will do the same for you."

Female, 26 – 35

Sunday 18 March 2018

"I am not a lawyer but I have experienced sexual harassment in a law firm.

Six months into my first job I was sent alone to meet with two partners at a boutique law firm that was working on a project with my company. In part due to my naivety and showing respect for my seniors (they were over 20 years older), the conversation drifted away from my reason for being there.

Eventually I was asked how many men I had slept with, whether I had slept with someone in particular that we all knew, and if I would get on the table.

It took a lot of courage to report this to my employer, only to then hear my employer a few days later, after meeting with the partners, question whether I'd made it all up.

This has had a lasting impact. A few years on and I am still anxious about not being taken at my word and paranoid when I'm the sole female in any meeting."

Female, 18 - 25

Saturday 17 March 2018

"Male 36-45 says below that:

"Most of the content here and in the media is all consensual and not in breach of any laws... Yes, it may reflect a poor culture and diminished values but it is a reality that has been ongoing for some time [Oh, so that's okay then...?]. I think the focus should be on behaviours and incidents that are actually against the law otherwise we are going to have a constant stream of innuendo and stories."

The real creep is always someone else isn't it. It couldn't possibly be you or your mates, could it male 36-45...?

This sums up the problem in a nutshell. Men seem to be able to accept that actual sexual violence is not okay but abusing one's position, sexualising the work place, hitting on people who can't say no is not illegal and therefore okay. Just good old consensual fun.

Sexual harassment doesn't have to be illegal to seriously undermine a woman's health, confidence and career. If you have read this blog and failed to appreciate that then you really need to start asking yourself some questions."

Female, 18 - 25

"I work in a legal role for the government, and sexual harassment/gender discrimination is rife there too. This has involved:

- Comments about women's legs/arms showing - the sexualising of women's legs/ankles/arms/shoulders;
- Ass grabbing;
- Questions about whether women can work if they have a baby/ want to have a baby/ plan on having a baby."

Female, 26 - 35

"I am grateful to have the opportunity to share my experiences in an anonymous forum. I wish I were courageous enough to make my comments publicly.

I worked at one of the large commercial law firms in Auckland for about four years. During my time there, I experienced the following:

- The male solicitors ranked all of the female solicitors on a three-tier ranking system. They openly discussed women's rankings in the office.
- When a young female lawyer travelled up to the Auckland office to assist on a case, several male solicitors took turns to walk past the office where she was sitting and then indicated whether she was worth sleeping with by giving a thumbs up or a thumbs down.

- The women in the team were given nicknames that corresponded with their physical attributes.
- When a young woman was frustrated about a legal issue, she was asked if she was on period.
- A partner was talking on the phone to a client and assured the client that there were 'plenty of good looking sheilas in the office' and he would make sure he sent one down to deliver the documents.
- Many, many loud conversations in the office, during work hours, where the men discussed their Tinder exploits in graphic detail.
- Men who would walk past women and make gestures as if they were 'motor-boating' them. They thought the women didn't realise what they were doing.
- A partner with a creepy reputation who always found a way to end up going home in a taxi with a particularly drunk female solicitor, 'just to make sure she got home ok'. This happened several times. I don't know what happened after they left the function.

Many of these are not offensive enough to warrant a complaint to HR alone. However, looking back on the experience, I now realise that this was a toxic environment that was rife with sexual harassment.

I commend all of the brave women who are standing up against this culture."

Female, 26 – 35

"Amazing range of stories for such a small nation. Some truly sickening reports. In my experience, workplace harassment is symptomatic of managerial dysfunction in a business (at best) and state-wide or international corruption (at worst). Protecting vulnerable parties from victimisation in a bad workplace can be very difficult, especially if potentially influential persons (or any who pursue justice) are targeted with pressure as well. Some prefer to walk out than stay in toxic environments, others have even resorted to taking their own lives to send a message to peers. This problem is bigger than the law."

Female, 46 – 55

Friday 16 March 2018

"I am one of the many males who has seen the misogyny and rape culture that is fostered at law school - but has done next to nothing about it.

I know my silence and cowardice has made me complicit and a part of the problem and there are no excuses.

I've considered myself an intersectional feminist for a long time, and yet I've been friends with male law students who are open with their misogyny and warped attitudes about sex and consent - from sharing private photos of their 'conquests' with others to making 'jokes' that shame and sexualise female law students. I think I sat there time and time again saying nothing to fit in or because I thought I was okay because I wasn't like that and I should just let them be without ever calling them out. I am

disgusted with myself and vow to never be complicit in this culture of misogyny ever again.

I think the problem is so pervasive that the New Zealand Law Society needs to look into making education on the responsibilities that all law students have to end the culture of misogyny and sexual harassment at law school a compulsory part of Legal Ethics courses in the undergraduate LLB programme and in the professional responsibility modules at Professional legal studies programmes.

I think there also needs to be better avenues of accountability and reporting - including for example, the explicit prohibition of sexual harassment and misogyny in the Lawyers and Conveyancers Act (Lawyers: Conduct and Client Care) Rules 2008 - with reference to sexual assault in the Crimes Act 1961.

I want to express my support to all the courageous women who have shared their stories here and in the media -and all the courageous women who have not shared their stories for whatever reason. I vow to do my best to use my male privilege and other privileges I have to support this #metoo movement in enabling a radical cultural shift within our field so that women can feel safe and respected not only at law school and in legal practice, but also in wider society."

Male, 18 - 25

"If the commenter below can seriously read the many posts on this blog and say that it is mostly consensual, then that pretty much sums up the problem. Just because something isn't illegal doesn't make it okay."

Female, 18 – 25

"I don't condone any predatory or illegal behaviours however most of the content here and in the media is all consensual and not in breach of any laws. Yes, it may reflect a poor culture and diminished values but it is a reality that has been ongoing for some time. I think the focus should be on behaviours and incidents that are actually against the law otherwise we are going to have a constant stream of innuendo and stories (i.e. the Chapman Tripp story from today) which are, for all intents and purposes, merely casual liaisons between consenting adults."

Male, 36 - 45

"I would like the Law Society to conduct a thorough survey of both men and women in the profession asking them if they have experienced, conducted or witnessed various behaviour being conducted in or associated with the workplace by a senior lawyer (male or female) towards a junior lawyer (male or female). The survey should be worded as neutrally as possible. The questions do not have to identify whether the person being surveyed is the perpetrator, witness or victim, but it would have to identify the gender, seniority and size of law firm of that person. They could state the number of times such behaviour has occurred.

The survey would be purely for fact-finding purposes and anonymous to protect individuals' and law firms' identities. I would like law firms and senior members of the profession to publicly encourage

their staff to participate in the survey as honestly as they can and give staff the time during work hours to complete it. The data should be submitted directly to the Law Society without any intervention from the law firms.

If critics have a better way of collecting this data I would welcome their constructive feedback. The Law Society could solicit such feedback prior to designing the survey.

I personally believe this should be the very first step because it appears that no amount of anecdotal evidence (no matter how extensive or egregious) is enough for a law firm or senior lawyer (especially male) to come out and acknowledge that this is happening. It is frustrating that people have to re-live negative experiences only to feel like they are shouting into the void of silence. I have yet to see a senior male lawyer publicly and honestly acknowledge and validate one of these experiences.

Once the survey results come out, I would like law firms to have to make a public statement on them and proactively state what action they will take. Part of the disappointment in [employer redacted]'s response to its scandal is its lack of proactiveness and how it, in my opinion, has only acted in response to and only as much as it has to respond to the criticism du jour."

Female, 26 - 35

Thursday 15 March 2018

"Having a lot of really close friends who are girls, I have seen first-hand the objectifying, casual and snide things done on a daily basis by an unaware male cohort. Offhand remarks, like the one I heard last night about one of my friends that "she's bitchy but she has nice boobs though". Or the way that men will talk about 'annihilating women'. I was in a dilemma recently where I felt horribly offended at a video someone was trying to show me, where two men comment on random photos on women and "if they would". I had such an urge to tell this person that the video was horrifically objectifying and very offensive, but I had almost a fear of speaking out and stopping, only mustering a "that is quite objectifying though and not really a nice video". The guilt that came with that was strong, but I can never understand the guilt, pain, and torment that comes from speaking out about personal sexual advances which were unwanted. I have tried every day of my adult life to ensure I never overstep my own endeavours toward women, but it is always a learning curve. There is always something I can do which can serve both myself and a woman better.

I will also say that the men who try to placate gender issues by making it about "those men are just some of us, but not all of us" are unnecessarily diluting the problem with their own insertion (I didn't want to make a pun there but it happened anyway). While this is a noted observation, I can only see they serve to protect their own agenda. Men of all backgrounds have a lot to learn. It took me over five years of constant learning about what is and is not okay and I still feel I have come short. But that surely is better than expecting that since most men are 'ok' that the others should not be looked at. The culture is pervasive, it is disgusting, and it has to stop now."

Male, 18 - 25

"I struggle with the constant sexual innuendo, crude banter, foul language and "jokes" by some lawyers/police at Court. It's as if to "fit in" in the District Court arena you have to have a filthy mind and be happy to share it. Those who don't share that jocular, "ballsy" approach are left out and, I suspect, are considered weak. It's extremely difficult to put yourself out there and say you feel uncomfortable, for fear of being side-lined. Only once was I so shocked at what was said to me that I called the man out on it (he used the word c**t). To be fair he appeared to acknowledge he'd gone too far and after that he toned things down around me, but I always felt he was then overly cautious and treated me as a "stick in the mud" from then on. He's a judge now. Many women barristers have a very aggressive, hard persona and I can't help thinking they are assuming a more typically masculine attitude in order to be able to survive in the role. That saddens me.

In terms of Second Year Law Camp, it's been running for over 20 years (not 10 as the media keeps saying). I had heard enough about the drinking and activities to know I didn't want to go. So I didn't. And I always felt left out going forward. I missed the opportunity to bond with my fellow students and never formed the close ties and networks that can be so important. At the time I didn't think too much of it, but looking back, it is a sad indictment that a law student's entire university experience, and potentially even their career options, can be negatively affected because they don't want to get drunk and wrestle half-naked in jelly. Thinking about it now, it is clear that the belief that confident, successful lawyers/law students are those who drink lots and get down and dirty, begins and is perpetuated in law school. This needs to stop."

Female, 36 - 45

"I attended the [university redacted] Law camp in 2012. Everything that has been written is true. As the first proper chance to get to know my law school cohort I felt significant social pressure to "fit in". Fitting in definitely meant drinking excessively and sometimes meant acting in an overtly sexual way. I did not fit in at law camp. It was not traumatic for me, but it was uncomfortable and as a 19 year old it formed the basis of my understanding of the culture in the legal profession. Subsequently I made an, initially subconscious, and later very conscious decision not to spend any of my free time with other law students (outside my immediate friend group). I also thought for the next three years or so that I no longer wanted to enter the legal profession. I changed my mind and am now a lawyer who is lucky enough to work in a small and supportive firm."

Female, 18 - 25

"I began my legal career as a summer clerk at a top-tier firm in Auckland. The young male partner in the team I was working in refused to address me by name and only called me "summer clerk". At the Christmas drinks, he put shot after shot of tequila in front of me and instructed me to drink. A male senior associate at the same firm, at a separate function, stood next to me at a bar, put his arm around my waist and asked me if I worked out. Other females in the firm came to my rescue and warned me to watch out for him. He was clearly notorious for creepy behaviour, yet no one had reported it because they knew nothing would be done. He was later promoted to partner.

I have been treated like crap by a number of male partners who I have worked under, but have similarly worked for some great lawyers both male and female. Poor treatment of junior employees

is not exclusive to the legal profession, but in a profession where we are meant to be held in high regard, it is so important that this issue, particularly in relation to sexual harassment, is properly addressed."

Female, 26 - 35

"I was a law clerk at a top 5 law firm in Wellington about 17 years ago. A partner I was working with me asked me to come over to his house to have dinner with his family. I wasn't that keen but thought I should probably go. I turned up and was met at the door by his teenage daughter who said "are you dad's new girlfriend". I thought that was strange but didn't think too much of it (moody teenager perhaps..)

The partner's wife and daughter were there at dinner but it was all a bit formal and awkward. After dinner I went to the kitchen to help with the dishes. I couldn't see the wife and daughter, they had disappeared. I went back to the lounge only to walk in to see the lights had been dimmed and there was the partner sitting on a couch, legs folded, arms flung behind him on the couch and a large red glass of wine waiting there for me next to him. I said I had to go and fled. Creepy!!

Things were very awkward from that day on but I had to put up a brave face.. I remember being pretty frightened about having to travel to Nelson to attend a hearing with the partner. Luckily nothing else happened but I was extremely uncomfortable whenever I had to be alone with him."

Female, 36 - 45

"I did not feel comfortable when I appeared in court as counsel more and more these days now when it seemed to me that some of the judges had been personally offended by me even though I had not done anything.

In one morning, I was in a call over. While the judges addressed others in the court room by their surnames or when she did not know their names, as counsel, she called me you people.

I sense growing amount of aggression towards me when I appear in court, simply because I am an ethnic counsel. I was once told before I made my submission that the judge did not find my argument convincing."

Female, 36 - 45

Wednesday 14 March 2018

"I left the law after 7 years in practice. I was tired of the toxic culture where bullying and sexual harassment was the norm. The final straw for me was being assigned a case with a trial that lasted a few months (hence working 7 days a week and many hours a day). I had to deal with the barrister's constant mood swings and belittling conduct towards me. After the trial was over I was exhausted, depressed and had no self-confidence left. I finally made the decision to leave the profession, even after all the years of hard work to get where I was. The day I left a partner who I respected emailed me to say it was a shame I was leaving the law and that he thought I suffered from 'imposter

syndrome'. Looking back, I wonder how much was self-induced and how much it was simply having my confidence eroded by all the bullying behaviour in the legal world. It seems from this blog a big part of it was the later."

Female, 26 -35

Monday 12 March 2018

"I began winter clerking at a large Auckland law firm and progressed through to a summer clerk then a law clerk and eventually a solicitor. In this time I was the subject of sexual harassment numerous times and heard of my colleagues being sexually harassed numerous times. This ranged from inappropriate remarks to unwanted sexual advances. I also experienced bullying behaviour from my female partner.

In each case the common denominator was a power imbalance where a more junior person was harassed by a person in a 'higher' role.

I have now moved to a medium sized firm and the sexual harassment and bullying are no longer an issue. However, there is still an unconscious bias / 'old boys club mentality'.

Gender discrimination and sexual harassment is still very much an issue and is by no means a thing of the past. Incredibly sad to say in 2018."

Female, 26 - 35

Saturday 10 March 2018

"I've worked in both a small and large firm and have never experienced, or witnessed, any sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual behaviour. The men I work with are very respectful towards women. However, it is clearly happening in some workplaces and it is a disgrace to the profession. At the moment, I'm embarrassed to say I work in a large law firm because of the current connotations.

It is clear that the profession has much work to do. Setting harassment aside, we need more women in senior positions in firms, more women QCs and more women judges. It's not going to magically happen by itself - women law graduates have outnumbered men for a long time, but still men overwhelmingly dominate the top ranks of the profession."

Female, 26 - 35

Friday 9 March 2018

"A partner at [employer redacted] openly admitted to me that they hire attractive women. [Employer redacted] is not the only firm who refers to the "menu."

Female, 26 - 25

"The partner I worked for had an affair with another partner. They made us feel sick with their flirting and suggestive behaviour in the office. It was so disgusting and disrespectful to see them carrying on like horny teenagers that most of their teams left. It ruined our work on some otherwise really interesting litigation files, and should not have been tolerated by the firm."

Female, 26 - 35

"I did the summer clerk process, doing the rounds at the cocktail parties. At the [employer redacted] cocktail party they did a mock interview in front of the group. The purpose of the mock interview was to prepare us for the interviews. A summer clerk candidate was chosen and went to the front with a male senior associate at the firm. In the mock interview the senior associate asked the candidate what she's doing later and if he could have her number. Everyone laughed. I put my offer from them in the bin."

Female, 26 - 35

"The senior women in law firms are complicit in the sexual harassment that exists within firms. When you start work in a firm, they take you aside for a fire side chat, and let you know how to abide the system and get ahead. Don't raise issues or you won't get work. If you don't get work, it's game over."

Female, 26 - 35

"When I summer clerked a partner at [employer redacted] was expelled from the partnership for having sex with a summer clerk. It was his third offence and he had been on his last warning. [Further information redacted to prevent identification of individual]."

Female, 36 - 45

Thursday 8 March 2018

"I work for one of the big corporates in Auckland. I fully support this focus on sexual harassment in the workplace. It is not acceptable on any level.

I have to ask though, at what cost are these reviews coming at?

With such a firm focus on sexual harassment my workplace seems to have closed their eyes to the constant bullying, belittling and daily harassment that occurs at the hands of seniors (very much by female partners) to their juniors.

Creating a culture that encourages people to speak out is impossible when that same culture has allowed these people to humiliate and belittle those around them. How is one meant to speak out against sexual harassment when you're encouraged to go to partner or the partnership that creates such an atmosphere where you feel victimised, harassed and bullied on a daily basis.

It is well known that lawyers often suffer from significant mental health issues. At what point are the partners at the top of these firms, men and women, going to look themselves in the mirror and ask how they are contributing to the issue.

Where juniors feel they cannot approach the partners because all the partners witness how they are treated on a daily basis, how are we meant to survive in these firms?

Big firms lose many fantastic solicitors to other industries due to the horrible environment they are expected to endure. What will make these bullies change? A suicide at their hands? Because that is the way it is heading. Over and over again."

Female, 26 - 35

"I worked in a large national law firm 25 years ago as a young solicitor. There were 4 partners on our floor and two of them were having an affair with each other. The male partner would come to work and brag about how he was shagging the female partner and about all the other women he had sex with. I felt so uncomfortable around him. He would look at any woman as a potential conquest. It got to where I would walk the other way if I saw him coming. I avoided doing his work. It made me feel like I did not fit in with that culture and I ended up leaving. I have stuck in the law but made it on my own.

The ugly flip side of the coin on all this sexual harassment stuff that no one wants to talk about much is all the senior women who have not spoken up, but stood back and been part of the problem. I remember about 20 years ago, a female lawyer, who is now one of the "glitterati" of our profession, saying that the only the way to get ahead in law is to have relationships with men who can help you advance your career. She then went on to bounce around various affairs with high ranking men even though she was married, and so followed her own advice but it's a shame she could not have been a better role model for younger women and tried to achieve greatness on her own efforts. Those comments she made have always stuck and I still feel sickened by them. Women who think they have to suck the dick of a boring, ugly, aging, lawyer just to get ahead is part of the sexual harassment culture of the legal profession."

Female, 46 - 55

"Having never worked in a law firm (but in professional services), I'm not sure I'm the correct person to be making these observations, but rape culture and institutionalized ignorance certainly doesn't start at a grad/working level, it begins in law school. While at law school I saw significant amounts of concerning behaviour that, both the university and law society, deigned to take responsibility for addressing.

It starts in year one where voluntary older students often hosted review sessions and extra pass/tutorials ran both at the university and in the halls. I heard of many instances where older students leading these extra study sessions abused their positions, promising exam or test answers in exchange for sexual favours from first year students trying to get into competitive second year entry. When students complained to their RAs the behaviour was almost never reported as the tutors were

often friends of the RAs, or there was no one to report to: they weren't always employees of the university (pass tutors were), the law school didn't organize the sessions, and the halls claimed they were part of the universities responsibility.

Year two law camp was an utter shambles. The predatory behaviour from senior law students, and at times, university staff, was rife. Students were plied with heavy booze and often 'mandatory' drinking games/sessions. Occasionally drugs made their way onsite too which added fuel to the fire. The amount of senior students who crowed about drunken conquests, alleged threesomes and 'downright filthy' *said with a grin* sexual antics, haunted my girlfriends throughout their law school experience. You would often end up being tutored by said senior students who were responsible for grading tutorial tests or assignments, or granting you a pass/fail participation mark. Despite multiple complaints the university refuses to take any accountability for events at law camp - 'its organized outside of university grounds and through an independent student organization'.

There was an incident with a friend who ran for a position in the student law society against an ex-boyfriend who had been abusive. She knew going into it, it wasn't going to be pretty, but ran anyway - something I will always respect her for. While she had a clean campaign, the ex degraded her all over social media with posts on university pages, Twitter etc. where she was called a 'rigid bitch', 'pretentious cunt' and 'too fat for her own good'. She was a size 6 at the time.

There were rumours the ex shared nude photos of her with members of the existing society executive, friends and he threatened to post them on social media if she didn't withdraw. The law school and law society both refused to take any responsibility for his actions - law school saying they had no involvement in student clubs, society claiming they had no control over what students do in their personal lives. When she gave her speech at the annual AGM, on international women's day of all days, one of the ex's friends asked her if 'she'd continue wearing skin-tight dresses for the boys if elected'. There was one women in the crowd of almost 200 who shouted that it was a totally inappropriate question to ask, but the [role of person redacted] who was meant to be timekeeping and moderating the questions, existing executive and staff members present, said nothing. She lost the campaign. That year the executive had 2/12 members who were women, despite our law school having more female law students than male. The ex was re-elected two other times while at law school and was confirmed to be one of the most predatory executive members at second year law camp and law society events.

If we are ever going to make a change in this industry, it starts at the beginning. When we are training young lawyers. Our law societies, schools, firms all need to take accountability and step in when they see or hear in appropriate behaviour rather than passing the buck."

Female, 18 - 25

"I don't think that this issue is limited to big firms only and is just part of the wider bullying culture that exists within the law profession. I started my career in a smaller law firm (4 partners and around 10 lawyers). Good work was definitely handed out based on gender. The males had "boys nights" outside of the office (I only found out about this as one showed me the email as he did not want to be part of it) where they played poker and drank whiskey (how cliché!) then they got all the high level

work whilst the females got the left over/low billing work which resulted in us not reaching our targets therefore not getting pay rises/promotions etc. The emails that circulated even said "don't tell the girls". I kicked up a stink but the issue was not addressed by the partners - even though we had a female managing partner, she didn't seem to care. However, at times where there were male clients to impress the females were invited to drinks/events to secure the client, never getting to work on the file.

I work in litigation and during my time in Court have seen police prosecutors treat males and females very differently. The men seem to get better outcomes from the prosecutors. I do think there is bullying in general due to the hierarchical nature of the profession. I remember being in Court and asking a very innocent question of a senior female barrister who responded with "don't get smart with me missy". To succeed it is almost like the females act like super aggressive men just to cope. Even though I've now been practicing for 12 years I still feel like these women want to pull up the ladder behind them. I can totally understand why females have children and don't return to the profession - who wants to deal with this when you have other, far more important things to do at home!

I don't know the answers to how we fix this though...."

Female, 26 - 35

"I witnessed a partner in one of the top law firms in Auckland (notably NOT RM), who is 'happily' married with three children act inappropriately. It was an industry function, with a mix of companies and professional firms in attendance.

The said individual targeted a graduate from our company (in her first 2 months of employment) and proceeded to charm her with champagne, then nip out to the balcony to start kissing her.

His brash confidence combined with her complete naivety resulted in an awkward outcome for all involved. We as employers felt an obligation to help her understand the importance of remembering that industry functions are still a form of workplace. Not sure who was going to help remind this older and wiser gentleman of that fact...."

Female, 26 - 35

"I summer clerked at a big firm in Auckland. Throughout the summer, a senior male paid me a lot of attention. In the office, he was always appropriate and it was nice to have friend, despite the 15+ year age gap.

Then came the Christmas party. While I consensually kissed him at the party, at the end of the night when we had returned to the office to pick up our stuff things started to get a bit intense. I said no multiple times and attempted to leave. It took multiple attempts for me to get him to accept that I wasn't interested in more. The night ended with me walking out the foyer of the building with him hot on my tail, telling me how badly he wanted to f*** me, that he could get us a hotel room, and telling me how he loved checking me out at work.

Checking Facebook the next day, I discovered he was married with a number of children.

Every day I walked back into the firm and through that foyer I felt sick to my stomach. I couldn't wait for the summer to end. I was incredibly unhappy and uncomfortable being in the office, and my work suffered.

I confided in a female colleague about what happened and she told me not to tell anyone else and to just forget about it. I (apparently foolishly) ignored her, as my way of dealing with it was to talk about it, and I told a couple of other senior women. At the end of the summer, HR told me that those women had approached them and said I wasn't a good fit for the firm.

I wasn't asked back. Knowing I wouldn't have to return to that building could not have made me happier.

He, obviously, kept his job, and was promoted shortly after."

Female, 26 - 35

"After having to put up with drunken clients in the working office of a Friday who hit us and stop us working, I brought it up with the Partners...I was told to suck cock or fuck off....they pay my wages...then, a couple of days later I was frog marched out of the office. The only way to deal with this is to get a better employment lawyer than they have. Part of being a good person and a great woman is to stand up for other people, and live by your own values. No single young woman under my charge EVER faced any harassment from a man or otherwise. They were my ducks and I would rather lose my job than have them in unhealthy jobs or environments.

Oh, I was also called a F***** Bitch and Dick by a colleague...that resulted in me getting a poor performance review because I would not sort it out...I expected my "female" boss to speak to him and sort that...she was gutless, cringing, and I got the lawyers in - again. I got what I wanted (an apology and a good review as I deserved) and kept on in my job for another 14 months...Outrageous to think I had to do this...colleagues were a waste of space. I was on my own...until a fab new man came to the office and sorted promptly. Took a year to get my apology BTW."

Female, 46 - 55

"My ex-boss, male partner in a Family Law firm asked me:

- whether I had a Brazilian wax
- whether my new boyfriend and I were having sex yet
- whether I would be living with him before we got married (I am a Christian)
- when the relationship became serious, whether I would be asking for maternity leave in the next few years

He acknowledged he shouldn't be asking these types of questions on each occasion, but dismissed his obligations as an employer as 'it's okay though because we don't have that type of relationship'.

ALL of these comments were overheard by two female partners. They listened eagerly for the answers.

Years later, after having my first child, I asked to return part-time. One of the female partners met me for coffee to discuss my request. She asked:

- how many children did we plan on having?
- what would the age gaps likely be?
- how long would I be wanting to work part-time for?

When I wouldn't answer her (ducking the questions, rather than outright calling her on her outrageous questioning - because how would that help my negotiation position?!) she asked me to go home and discuss my "family planning" with my husband and then let her know what we had decided.

Unsurprisingly, my request to work part-time was declined when I refused to give them the information sought. I was told the role was full-time or nothing. I resigned.

I did not take a personal grievance. As a new mother, working in a specialised area with a relatively small bench, against the resources of a successful firm, legal action was simply not a realistic option. If I had been leaving the law altogether I may have taken legal action.

I did not make a complaint to the Law Society because it did not occur to me. Even if it had, I probably would not have done so for the same reasons listed above."

Female, 26 - 35

"I heard how important it was to network at law school and in the legal profession and so I spent a lot of time at law school building up positive relationships with my lecturers. I would email them and ask to see them to discuss course material and to get feedback about my grades etc.

I became friendly with one lecturer and we would often get coffee every now and then. I enjoyed our conversations but after a while he began kissing me on the cheek every time he saw me. It started off in his office when no one was around but then he started to do it publicly in the hallway when he thought people weren't looking. One female lecturer actually caught him doing it one time and she looked absolutely horrified. I was really embarrassed the whole thing but, for his sake, I pretended like I was completely fine with it.

Each time he would kiss me, it made me feel extremely uncomfortable but I didn't want to say anything because of his seniority in the law school. Moreover, I had heard about how small the legal profession is and I wanted to maintain a good relationship with this person and not kick up a fuss just in case it came back to bite me.

I felt disappointed that just because I was a woman being friendly and wanting to build up a

professional relationship with him that he felt the need to kiss me. He certainly would not have done that if I was a male student building up a friendly professional relationship with him. It makes me feel like I have to worry about building relationships with older men in the profession."

Female, 18 - 25

"I worked in a small firm one summer while studying.

One day I was asked to come into the board room after a client meeting and to sign the documents on the table, as a witness to the signatures on them. I said I hadn't seen the signatures and the principal lawyer stated that this was just how it worked - so I went with it.

A few days later, I was again asked to do the same thing. I said I wasn't comfortable doing that unless I saw the signatures, to which the principal said: "that is never going to happen" and it would be a "waste of money" for me to join them in those meetings. I disagreed and it made for an incredibly unpleasant discussion. Later, he did concede that I was right - but asked if I could just do these second ones because they didn't want to get the clients back in again.

I still feel uncomfortable when I think about the fact that I did it and nowadays (working in a big corporate) there's no way I would do that. But – like so many stories here – I was well aware of the power imbalance that existed, and I wanted to 'do well' in my first job in a law firm."

Female, 26 - 35

Wednesday 7 March 2018

"The very first time I was employed as a lawyer, fresh out of law school and 22 years old, I worked for a medium-sized law firm in one of the larger cities. There were a lot of things I found challenging about that job - the sense that I didn't belong as I hadn't gone to the 'right school', the deep divisions between the lawyers and the support staff, the bullying attitude of my supervising partner, the heavy-drinking culture... but one incident that has always stayed with me was the time that two women lawyers who were more senior than me but below partner level, took me aside before the office Christmas party and advised me about which partners to steer clear of at the party. Apparently some of the male partners were inclined to get 'handsy' after a few drinks and so these women I suppose felt they were doing me a favour by alerting about who to avoid. I look back on that now and feel sad and angry too that the whisper network operated in that firm to possibly protect young women lawyers but also to shield senior male lawyers from the consequences of their behaviour. I wonder now why I didn't speak out. Why none of us did. But it's no mystery really - we were powerless, we were unsupported, we feared the costs of breaking rank."

Female, 36 - 45

"At the Christmas function, a young lawyer was harassing and being sexually forward to a woman who clearly had too much to drink. I told the man to bugger off and leave her alone and all he said was "She is asking for it". I wouldn't leave her sight until he had left.

The manager who I expressed my concerns too, did nothing! She said "I didn't see it, so I can't do anything about it."

Female, 26 - 35

"There is a man at work who always gets in your personal space and says inappropriate things. One day, he took things too far. He told me I looked "sexy" in my new dress and if he could have a picture with me. I now can't be in the same room as him in the office. I have raised my concerns with my manager, but she won't do anything."

Female, 26 - 35

"At [employer redacted] in Auckland new employees have been required to watch porn as part of the induction process. One of the named partners appears to think that it's a huge joke to pull out his penis at work and rest it on the shoulders of his young female solicitors. I have heard other male lawyers talking about this in recent weeks say that it was OK because they (the women) thought that it was funny and had not complained."

Male, 18 - 25

"The post by [name redacted] on [social media site redacted] is exactly why [employer redacted] won't learn from what happened. Sexual harassment may not have been her experience but she was a senior when she came in. Sexual harassment was my experience at the firm - and no it wasn't in Wellington. It was in the Auckland office. It happened multiple times. And HR and the partners were wilfully blind to what was happening. All they had to do was look up and ask their grads what they were experiencing. In one case it was happening at the ball in front of HR and they pretended they didn't see. I think it's an absolute shame that a senior woman like [name redacted] would write something so out of tune with the culture at her firm and the experience of young women at her firm.

Stop silencing young women [name redacted]. #metoo"

Female, 26 - 35

"I was raped by an older colleague at work after a work event. He told other colleagues I was "up for it" and a slut so no one would believe me. I haven't told anyone what really happened but I'm thinking about it."

Female, 18 - 25

"I was sitting in a lecture as a second year student dressed in formal attire, in preparation for my mock moot assessment later in the day. Once the lecture was finished, I made my way down the stairs as I did every day.

Except this time, the lecturer stared right at me, winked and said 'Looking good. Don't get into too much trouble.'

The lecturer had a rumoured reputation as a creep, constantly asked the 'pretty' girls in lectures to answer questions, and uncomfortably fawned over them when they answered. I've often thought about how many times a similar experience would have occurred to a student like me. The culture of sexism doesn't just begin in law firms. It's everywhere."

Female, 18 - 25

"There is a [role redacted to prevent identification of individual] at [university redacted] who has been well known as being 'a creep' for many years.

His reputation is that of only hiring attractive female research assistants - often without regard to the usual hiring processes (an example being a research assistant he met at his child's dance class). He not only lectures the course but takes one tutorial group (a practice that is uncommon at the law school), and often meets future research assistants (exclusively female) through this. Research assistants are told they have to dress 'professionally' - a requirement that does not apply to any other lecturers' assistants.

His favouritism starts often when a young female is in first year (a time when the power imbalance is most pronounced). Selected students have been given private assistance by him with course work (such assistance was not available to other students). Another escaped formal processes for plagiarism after meeting with the lecturer (which contravenes university protocol). His relationship with research assistants consistently involves weekly private meals and drinks outside of university hours as well as gifts.

His behaviour is well known amongst students, staff and Senior Leadership in the Law School to no avail. It was once used as comedic material for the annual Law Review.

This post only scratches the surface of his behaviour and to dismiss it as a joke is to ignore its serious nature."

Female, 26 - 35

"My senior solicitor was a female and a sociopath. While I faced many #metoo moments at the law firm I worked, the reason I ended up resigning was due to my senior solicitor's actions. My partner acted oblivious to how she treated me, but in reality she was wilfully blind to the treatment because the senior solicitor brought in more money than I did. I was bullied and treated horrifically, and HR knew about it...but the bottom line was more important than my mental health for the firm. So out I went."

Female, 26 - 35

Tuesday 6 March 2018

"I was a law student in the mid 2000s, and student/peer tutors who were at least third year law students were a cheap option for the uni to run tutorials. I slept with my student tutor who was only a year older/above me (drunken night, no regrets at the time) and then went overseas for a few months as it was the end of the year.

When I returned he invited me to a party at his flat. I said no, I wasn't interested, and then things turned nasty.

It turned out he had taken photos of me doing intimate acts, and also had a video camera set up in his room that recorded what had happened that night. He threatened to print the photos and leave copies of them hidden in the law school library if I didn't come to his party, or meet up with him that night. He also threatened to spread rumours about me to the other tutors if I kept ignoring his requests.

He didn't go through with it in the end and apologised the next day saying he was drunk and didn't mean what he said. But he kept texting me and harassing me to meet up with him anyway. I ended up transferring to another law school the following year anyway as the stress of potentially having my career torpedoed before it started was too much so I moved closer to home."

Female, 18 - 25

"I had a gap year before Uni to work as an office assistant at a commercial law firm in the city, so I could get some work experience before doing my law degree. As this was my first ever full time job and straight out of high school, I had nothing to compare this job to anything else.

I was bullied horrifically not only by two of the male partners, but also by my office manager who was female as well as the secretaries. The office culture was so toxic there that even the secretaries were horrible and mean to each other.

I had a salad thrown at my head by a partner because I had forgotten beetroot, I had to clean up kick marks in the walls, I got belittled in front of clients, had my hair pulled by one of the partners, rude remarks were made about me in front of colleagues, I had my butt smacked when I was bending over...these to name a few.

Every morning I would feel sick and dread going into work, but I just thought this was what work in the 'real world' was like.

The day I left I was belittled by a partner in front of a client who then rang back to the office to say what he said to me. When I got back to the office I was made fun of by the secretaries and the other partner. These behaviours had been going on for 6 months. I was mentally and emotionally exhausted by being treated like garbage for so long.

The next day I went to the doctor and was put on stress leave. I resigned during this period and was

forced to either sign a confidentially agreement or come back to work my notice, they obviously knew which one I would take."

Female, 18 - 25

"My experience is of bullying by senior female practitioners. The first was as a grad lawyer. I was given no guidance and left to deal with situations far over my head. I was picked at, belittled and subjected to comments about my appearance and weight. I received unclear and incomplete instructions (if any) and berated about my work. Largely because she overcommitted work wise (it was all about the \$\$) but sometimes it genuinely felt like she was doing it on purpose to play games. There was no accountability for the fact that she was supposed to be teaching and supervising me. I felt stomach churningly sick all the time, I dreaded going into the office and it started to affect all areas of my life. I wanted to leave but crazily felt I owed it to her to stay (she constantly told me that grads drain the firm and cost money rather than make it). I also felt like I needed experience because grad jobs had been so hard to come by. In hindsight I should have left much sooner but it's not that easy when you're in it. It was like everyone in the firm was institutionalised – there were excuses, "it's just the way she is" etc. It feels like female partners are untouchable because firms need them to maintain their gender quota. I later spoke to two of the grads before me and one had cried almost every day before coming in to the office and one had a breakdown.

The second was a few years later in my career and almost a carbon copy of the first. I tried to put steps in place so I wouldn't have to take work from her but that in itself was career limiting. There were the same excuses, "it's just her" etc. My ability to handle it was so much less – the dread returned and followed me around outside of work. I left and left practice altogether. At times I regret leaving a career that I put so much into building but the bullying would have destroyed me – I still feel much less resilient than I was, anxious, easier to upset. "

Female, 26 – 35

Monday 5 March 2018

"I went to a second year law camp, where I saw senior staff members visit. It was led by older law students. Everyone was encouraged to binge drink. In the 'talent show' there was excessive nudity (mostly women) and simulated threesome sex act, and simulated blow job. I felt really uncomfortable and purposely didn't drink much because I was scared of being taken advantage of."

Female, 18 - 25

"I didn't experience sexual harassment personally but witnessed a lot of it at my old firm. It's fair to say that "locker room talk" was the norm and not just on Friday nights when people are drinking/socialising. Everyone laughed along, partners and seniors, males and females, even when it was obvious that someone (usually a female) was uncomfortable. If you said anything it was brushed off as a joke and you were made to look like a politically correct party pooper ruining all the fun.

I complained to HR about one particular senior that made a lot of inappropriate comments about women almost daily. The response from the HR director (a female) was: "But isn't he so funny?!" Some girls in his team felt too uncomfortable to stay at work late when he was there and the rest of the team had left - as a result they missed on out work. The partner that this senior reported to was the sexual harassment officer for the floor and she was completely oblivious to the behaviour in her own team, let alone the firm in general.

I've seen other people say they feel too scared to "like" articles on social media discussing this (I am too) which says a lot - we have a long long way to go before women will even speak up while they are still employed at the workplace they experienced the harassment - and even further before HR actually does anything about it."

Female, 26 - 35

"I have worked in two large law firms and while my experience in the first was largely positive and sexual harassment free, in the second I was not so lucky. From my first day in this firm I was targeted by a senior colleague in my team. Despite being married and having a new born, nothing stopped this predator from using all forms of social media and communication work and personal to get to me. He continued to wear me down at work events, drinking events and during networking opportunities. As awful as this was I was more surprised by the lack of support from other females in the office, in particular other juniors who turned their backs on me, looked at me as if I was the one leading him on and basically put out the word that I was "giving as good as I got". For those of you out there who have experienced the female vitriol which often occurs simultaneously when you are being sexually harassed by the "jock of the firm", know that you are not alone.

While the details of how I was being sexually harassed I am not comfortable divulging I will say that this behaviour only stopped when I left this firm and cut off all contact, with most of my colleagues and my sexual harasser. I by no means think I was his last victim and know full well I was not his first. While I know "running away" doesn't solve anything, if I had not left when I did and without taking further action I cannot honestly say I would have made it to my current firm where I am valued and go to work every day, loving the law and eager to work hard for my clients, my peers and my supervisors.

For those of you who are in the position I was, change is slow and it is not easy. If your mental health, your relationships, your work and your physical appearance are suffering, it is time to get out. Cut your losses and go somewhere where female empowerment is encouraged, women are treated as equals and you aren't getting fondled while you are trying to enjoy a beverage or make conversation. Go somewhere where you can enjoy work every day and not have to look over your shoulder.

I welcome the media coverage of these issues, I applaud those who have come forward so far and those Universities and institutions who are openly saying no to the organisations that encourage and tolerate this kind of behaviour and abuse.

I thank God every day that I escaped the sexual harassment I suffered in a previous firm and that my health has recovered. I could not be more grateful that my personal relationships remain intact and I

do believe I am stronger for having experienced that. But, I would never wish what happened to me on my worst enemy. For anyone who this post resonates with, be strong, get support and take any help you are offered in dealing with this problem. It is not you, it is the institution, the power imbalances and the absolute creeps who choose to act like this and think it's okay.

Do not tolerate it, sexual harassment is never okay and don't blame yourself. If it is right for you as it was for me, then get out and get out now. I have no regrets."

Female, 26 - 35

"I didn't go into a large firm as a graduate because I was told by the big firm's HR people at uni, my grades didn't cut it. They didn't. But when I saw my friends become law clerks, I also realised that I wasn't skinny or pretty enough. Their stories of sexual harassment; long hours; drinking; drugs; sex with colleagues and male chauvinist clients were overwhelming. This was 12 years ago, this isn't new.

The worst sexual harassment I experienced was at a bar dinner, when a "colleague" and "contemporary" explained to me in great detail all the sexual things he wanted to do to me in the toilets that night. He told me I wanted to sleep with him and it was inevitable it would happen. He did it so openly in front of lawyers and judges, no one commented.

I took the path of a smaller firm in the provinces. When I arrived at one workplace – an older male partner frequently touched the female staff on the waist, hips and necks. They were uncomfortable. He would laugh and say he was like the old grand-pa, harmless. He wasn't. He slept with clients, he preyed on the vulnerable and weak – both for both sex and power. He told me he hired the receptionist cause her "big tits" impressed the other male lawyers who came to the office.

People saw the partners as upstanding members of their community, yet the cheating, drinking and exploitation was rife. In the end I became a target when change slowly came in as there was no room for this behaviour, I was called a "fat c**t" and a "vicious bitch". When they left the firm they openly spread rumours about me. They thought I'd closed their club down.

Sexual harassment, sexual assault and bullying – law culture norms. The law society is either unaware or turns a blind eye – I'd say the latter. These men who behave like this are known yet form some reason the "old boys club" closes rank for them. When I went to NZLS, branch or dinner events with the partners, people told me I worked for great men."

Female, 36 - 45

[First half of the post redacted at the request of the author].

"Based on my own experience in the profession, I have the following recommendations:

1. When a person is applying to practice on his or her own account, they must provide references from junior members of the team and support staff in each place where they have worked in the past 5 years.

2. Send out an email to all lawyers who have worked with that person to give them the option of giving any reason why that person should not practice on his or her own account.
3. Making it compulsory for all law firms with more than one lawyer to be a part of the EPA programme, or somehow ensuring people in small firms are not disadvantaged by not having access to EPA.
4. Having an external person to whom complaints about bullying can be made - I know there is the friends panel and the Law Society, but it would be good if this person/group had a legal background but wasn't practising.
5. Having the practicing on own account licence renewed every 3 years and any incidences raised to the independent person be brought to the attention of the select committee.
6. Compulsory seminars on workplace bullying and sexual harassment in the practising on own account course. This would include people like those on this blog set out the impact of bullying and sexual harassment so these seniors can see for themselves what their behaviour is doing.
7. A compulsory course for people wanting to renew their practising on own account licence which includes a seminar on the impact of bullying and sexual harassment.
8. One criteria for practising on own account being that the Law Society is satisfied that the person won't bully or sexually harass staff.
9. Having a mentoring programme like the Judges do - having someone who isn't in your firm who you can go to if needed. I think this is especially important in litigation. Maybe if each area had a few lawyers with 5+ PQE who could put their hands up to mentor each new grad. I would not have coped in my year in that other firm without support of senior lawyers outside that firm and from my former bosses.
10. The Law Society, if it decides to take action on all of these blog posts, to give the option for all of us to speak to the Law Society face to face about matters.
11. Having a staff satisfaction survey annually and employers having access to those results, if they have good results, they could use them in recruitment."

Female, 26 – 35

"I went to one of those university camps at the start of my second year (which is meant to be a celebration of making it into 2nd year) and it was disgusting. We were forced to drink huge amounts of spirits during compulsory drinking games run by the older students and there was lots of sex between students which probably wasn't consensual because people were so drunk. I felt scared the whole weekend that I was going to pass out and be taken advantage of by some creep.

Some of the students (including the older students) had this boys club/predator mentality and bragged in the weeks after about their "conquests". Several of my friends were the subject of horrible gossip and then had to endure the remainder of law school with them. I think universities need to take some responsibility for essentially enabling the kind of behaviour that goes on at these camps because it clearly has a flow on effect into the legal profession."

Female, 26 - 35

Sunday 4 March 2018

"This is a noble effort, but I do have some concerns with some of the reports being posted here, which I share as someone working and trained outside of the legal profession, but with strong personal and professional ties to the profession.

1. Several of the complaints here paint university legal training as insufficient for working as a lawyer. Do young law students/graduates not understand that universities are not vocational institutions? The purpose of a law degree is to give one a grounding in the law, not to train one as a lawyer. These are very different things. No one graduates from university with the skills to do a specific job. No lecturer in their right mind would (in New Zealand at least) write a course description to suggest as much. Sour grapes because you graduate with a degree to find there is still a long road ahead of you is not grounds for a grievance. Deficiencies in the quality of mentoring and training provided to graduate employees are.
2. Actual *abuse* aside, many people are assholes. To succeed in any field, you need to be able to tolerate and deal with dickheads. That is reality. Employers can be horrible, colleagues can be horrible, clients can be horrible. One thing young professionals need to learn, and quickly, is to discriminate between personal and professional criticism. When people are passionate (which the best minds in a field tend to be), the lines can be blurred. Conflating this with systematic bullying does no one any favours.
3. The culture around overworking, under-resourcing and undermining young graduates in large law firms is a massive problem. But it is well known, and it is not restricted to the legal profession, but is common across the professional services and many other sectors. Yet graduates still line up to get a foot in the door. You know what will force change? The inability of these firms to attract quality talent. Vote with your feet, there *are* other options. The naivety of respondents here is quite astounding, "No other trade or profession would continue feeding graduates into the jaws of firms and practitioners where the average employee lasts less than a year"? Think again. Massively. At least in law, if you leave, you can most likely get a job elsewhere in the same sector...
4. Everyone who is surprised that a big law firm, and [firm redacted] in particular, might act unethically and immorally needs to read "30 Pieces of Silver" by Anthony Molloy, QC. The nature of these firms is not secret, and if you were to read this work, and reconsider your employer of choice, you wouldn't be the first...
5. Law firms, in their structures, are inherently inefficient in getting work done, which probably has a lot to do with the complaints of overworking/exploitation. Leave the office. Don't answer your phone/email beyond reasonable hours, force your seniors to think about WTF it actually is they would like to achieve. My fear for the legal profession (globally) is that the AI and data science crowd are going to figure this out before the lawyers."

Male, 26 - 35

"The bleak truth is that a law degree is completely useless in preparing you to actually practice law, and so graduate and junior lawyers are completely under the thumb of the senior lawyers who actually have to teach them how to do the job they just spent tens of thousands of dollars qualifying for.

Some senior lawyers are good, wonderful mentors. Some - far too many - are sociopaths or worse, and the worst thing is that the profession collectively knows exactly who these people are.

No other trade or profession would continue feeding graduates into the jaws of firms and practitioners where the average employee lasts less than a year. But the Law Society doesn't seem to care."

Male, 26 - 35

"I know two ex-[employer redacted] lawyers. One had sex with at least 4 co-workers while he worked there (including in the boardroom). The other with numerous, including the "HR girls". They chatted about their sex life in their office and emailed each other about the Friday night "possibilities". I believe these same lawyers were told to stop looking at porn at work, that was for the home computer."

Female, 26 - 35

"While I was in his office alone, my supervising partner used to tell me stories of his sexual exploits and talk about how his clients had sex with their junior staff all the time. These conversations made me feel very uncomfortable and I would try to change the subject but it would keep going back to that topic. There was alcohol every Friday night but never food provided (or rides home) and lots of pressure to drink more, more, more.

My supervising partner was also a terrible manager, a poor communicator, imposed totally unreasonable deadlines on me and bullied me. When I tried to sort the problems out, he stopped giving me work & tried to get rid of me by putting me on a performance management program (even though I was at 140% of my billing target and had recently received a good performance review & 15% salary increase). HR were totally unsupportive and took his side over everything."

Female, 26 - 35

"After completing my law and arts degrees, I applied for a job at a small Christchurch firm in 2004. I was successful in getting an interview - at the interview, one of the male partners asked: "We know we probably shouldn't be asking this, but do you intend to have children?" I answered truthfully (I figured I wouldn't be doing myself any favours by refusing to answer) and responded that while I didn't have a partner at the time, I was hoping to have children one day. I didn't get the job. I'm not sure whether my response about wanting children was material in their decision, but it was an unpleasant experience. I was later successful in getting a job in Wellington.

I'd like to think that attitudes in the legal profession have changed in the last ten years or so (I now work in the public sector) but hearing recent stories I'm not sure they have."

Female, 36 - 45

"In keeping with the myopic self-indulgence and avaricious scorched-earth wealth distribution values of the baby boomers currently sitting at partner level across the profession, this push-back appears to be in consequence of a bubble formed by too many of the misogynistic bores going all in on an all-female appearance-based recruitment to furnish their offices with prospective playthings and eye-candy and reap the return on pay inequity. Up goes the probability. It was only a matter of time.

The bubble hasn't yet burst and there won't be institutional change. There will be a handful of individuals who probably aren't even the worst ostracized and scapegoated, one summer of all-male clerk recruitments, some token changes to wording in guiding documents, and new forms to fill for middle managers and HR. We haven't the cultural maturity or integrity or even basic honesty to identify let alone address the enormous issues at play. A whole ad hoc stratum of "independent" inquiry and review would simply mushroom into existence from within the same entitled professional class and its cultural norms so would prove only a costly exercise in articulating evasive and vague truisms.

If we were talking a skilled blue collar vocation the politicians would have already been in and obliterated any theoretical component and rendered the prerequisite education entirely and brutishly pragmatic, but because of professional pretensions in the unspoken class war the legal education remains theoretical – leaving a vast body of system-compliant/educated, debt-laden novices (should they have the good fortune of being picked from this sea of candidates) utterly at the mercy of their seniors in the profession to understudy the practical application of knowledge to diverse evolving multi-party procedural contexts, which is what the ultimate stock-in-trade is.

Within that dynamic of workplace dependency the most egotistical individuals are centrally placed, as partners and shareholders, maximizing their financial return and comforting themselves they are important enough. Observe the baby boomer culture of fine wine and food, Colombian marching powder, and lunchtime hookers; or, after the first two or three heart attacks, of fine wine and food, Colombian marching powder, lunchtime hookers, gym routines, and whizzing around town in a brand new SUV looking for any opportunity to jump into a spandex suit and competitively cycle for hours on end. These aren't men. These are entitled, private-schooled egos flailing around and fleeing the attenuating shadow of mortality bearing down on them.

Beneath these people are the professional legitimators of firm culture: the hardened subordinates on money good enough not to rock the boat, the crisis managers, the occasional outsourced cultural rebrand or renovation, and the strategic thinker prancing around blue-skying the granularity of deliverables (gratuitously employed on a fixed-term \$100,000 hand-out for no reason other than their husband is the regional or divisional manager of a marquee client or they are LinkedIn to an untapped vein of wealthy corporate prospective clients).

Staff solicitors, legal execs, support staff don't stand a chance. Women's vulnerabilities are elicited and viewed and counted as positives at the selection stage as beneficial aspects creating dependency, subservience, and the potential for exploitation. I have seen vulnerable employees forego and be denied legitimate pay entitlements. I have seen Stockholm syndrome become a standing joke. Bullying is so normative it has barely entered the conversation. Unless the juniors are sociopathic enough to

turn the system to their advantage, the workplace and its culture significantly increase their exposure to the preconditions for sexual harassment and/or abuse.

The issues will not be meaningfully dealt with until the current scandal jumps the fence to other large and medium firms, the profession as a whole, and then to other professions and onward. As a nation we need some cultural maturity — recognizing the power imbalance economic disparity instantiates and how closed self-regulated professions and groups reinforce these imbalances and create subset group norms and expectations, how recreational drug use and sexuality have been so long repressed under a spurious cloak and pretext of decency/propriety which has enabled exploitation abuse and predation, and how our cultural obsession with vocational martyrdom has eviscerated our lives of broader sounder meaning and social contexts outside the workplace in which to build meaningful relationships.

Cultural struggles directly against wealth and power failed spectacularly in the coming of “post-ideological” centrism and these new empowerments of communications technologies (#MeToo, etc.) seem to have precipitated a subversive entry point in the struggle, by exposing and undermining the perks and predilections of power rather than power itself. This is a legitimate strategy born unconsciously of desperation, yet I am sceptical of the reach it will achieve."

Male, 26 - 35

"Great to have this facility. Under the "Friends" protocols I have been consulted by a number of lawyers with issues concerning sexual harassment, among other things. Virtual slavery is one of those- where a newly admitted lawyer pays the law firm for the privilege of working for them, no salary or retainer involved. An aspect some might like to consider. The NZLS complaints system allows for anonymous complaints. Indeed there is no requirement for any complainant to provide true name, occupation or valid address. Combined with the fact there does not need to be a solicitor/client relationship or any direct connection between the lawyer and complainant the complaints structure allows a very cost effective anonymous means to raise any issue and have it addressed."

Male, 65 +

"I'm actually lucky to have worked in a small one woman firm for a woman for my first two years and then the next 8 years working for a male partner who is very descent and not at all horrible. My only thing to mention is the difficulty for women in the law to progress as working mums. I feel that you are ignored or tolerated as not profitable even though in fact we are often paid well below our skill level: I'm now happily self-employed after taking the leap to work for myself. I feel that often the bullying comes from appearing in court and dealing with difficult people in prosecutions and Judges - it's definitely not coming from our clients!

I feel so sorry for any lawyers who are being sexually harassed in their jobs. I had that in other jobs but never law. I've had other bad experiences but not sexual harassment in law."

Female, 36 - 45

Saturday 3 March 2018

"I worked as a solicitor for several years. I personally did not experience sexual harassment in the firms I worked for, but I decided to leave one job after a partner who I worked for made it clear to me that I was not suited to the role I was in. I believe that the nature of legal partnerships and the culture of the profession means that it is very difficult to have any redress when something goes wrong. If you are unfortunate enough to get offside with a partner or a senior lawyer who you report to, realistically there is little you can do other than leave. The New Zealand legal profession is small and raising an issue (whether about sexual harassment or otherwise) could affect your reputation and ability to obtain future employment."

Female, 26 - 35

"A Partner at the law firm I was working at in Auckland was having an affair with a 22 year old. His wife kicked him out and he moved into her apartment.

He took the 22 year old out to a restaurant with some other colleagues, and started putting his fingers in her vagina under the table. It was obvious what was happening and extremely uncomfortable for everyone there.

When the scandal became public knowledge, she got forced to leave, and paid out. She never went back to law. It ruined her career and reputation.

The Partner is still practicing. But many people are aware of his reputation.

The law firm hires mostly young women. The Practice Manager there did nothing when complaints were made. She was an awful bully herself.

It was sleazy and disgusting and an awful experience to have to go through at work."

Female, 26 - 35

"I spent 2 years in one of the 'Big Eight' firms in the early 90s, first as a summer clerk and law clerk in the Wellington office, then as a junior solicitor in the Auckland office. Although I wasn't subjected to sexual harassment, I was treated in a sexist and patronising way by two of the Auckland partners, one of whom told me I was "far too opinionated".

Due to what were perceived as personality clashes with another senior male partner I was progressively managed out of the firm over a period of about 6 months - starting with my work allocation suddenly "drying up" and have little or nothing to do for most of the day. Eventually I handed in my notice, which I think is what they wanted all along although I didn't recognize it as such at the time.

The atmosphere in both offices was macho and blokey, with heavy drinking on Friday nights at work drinks, and a lot of crude banter and back slapping. I regard myself as lucky to have got out when I

did, and into public sector legal practice, and I'm glad I didn't witness any sexual harassment although I'm sure it went on."

Female, 46 - 55

"I worked in law firms from age 16 to 27 and they were the most miserable 11 years of my life. Just as office assistant/secretary/PA/EA the bullying, intimidation and innuendo I was subjected to was disgusting. This RMV mess has also opened my eyes to how terribly female lawyers are also treated.

As support staff you are treated as dirt - screamed at and blamed for the lawyers' mistakes if you don't catch them. Files slammed down and thrown at you. Then you also have to contend with the senior partners who tell you they know all the senior police, politicians and high and mighty of society in town who then sling their arms over your shoulders as unwelcome comfort because you look upset. Or comment their opinions on what they think your (married) sex life involves. Or that marrying young means you miss out on what someone else can offer and you won't even know what good sex is and that they could show you a thing or two. It is rife throughout the entire industry.

Beyond inappropriate sexual comments and bullying there is also the chronic hours of stress and inevitable burn out in both lawyers and staff and total lack of support or understanding. It's an industry built on power games, deceit and manipulation and needs an overhaul from the top down if anything is ever going to change."

Female, 26 - 35

"I'm a recent graduate and have been lucky enough to find employment in a firm with a wholeheartedly different culture than what I anticipate many firms, large and small, possess. It has made the misogyny from lawyers from other firms even more apparent.

The first time I was in court, senior counsel for the other side (one of the leading practitioners in New Zealand in the area I hope to practice in) turned to me in a break, leaned in close to my face and whispered "I hope you're keeping up!" I had written most of the submissions being made. The severity of the incident pales in comparison to the entries I've read here, but it is something that will stay with me as long as I am in the profession.

I do hope that the women writing and reading here find a workplace that is upfront about these issues, and not just for the purposes of damage control. No person can or will ever deserve degradation or prejudice based on their sex or gender."

Female, 18 - 25

"Receptionists, secretaries, document production and other non-legal staff that work in law firms regularly experience rude and bad behaviour from both male and female lawyers, from summer clerks through to partners. The non-legal staff sit at the bottom of the hierarchy and are treated badly - exclusion, bullying, offensive comments and foul language. The HR manager has no idea who you are. If you complain, you should probably look for another job. This behaviour is old. This behaviour is

daily. This behaviour is accepted. You will be told you need a thick skin to work in a law firm."

Female, 18 - 25

"Finding a job in law is the hardest part of becoming a lawyer. NZ universities train more law graduates than there are jobs to go around. Law firms know this. Law Clerks, Grads and Juniors are replaceable by a million others. When you get a job, you know you are lucky. You may just put up with anything to keep it.

I get bullied on a daily basis in my firm and I watch as other staff around me (non-solicitors) are harassed and bullied. I came into law because I have a very strong voice and yet, I sit back and watch in horror as secretaries have files thrown at them for mistakes that are the lawyer's fault, not the secretary's. I say "sorry" when I have done nothing but follow instructions and then I am yelled at and gossiped about to the HR manager. Women lawyers in senior positions are so two-faced. As a solicitor, I never want to be like the woman lawyer I work under. When your staff are having panic attacks and are anxious to go to work. When you see a grown woman crying at her desk because, she has been stripped down by a woman who is, a psycho narcissistic lawyer and thinks she can do what she likes, and you are too afraid to use your voice when you studied law to speak up for others who couldn't, you suddenly realise that, this is a problem that is unlikely to go away anytime soon. I'm scared to even like the multiple stories online about RMV, in case my employer or a future one is keeping tabs on who are potential "trouble makers". I think there are a few of us doing that too. And I am ashamed at myself for "fitting in" with narcissists because by not speaking up, I am enabling the problem.

Those with power, have a great responsibility. Lawyers are not above the Rule of Law."

#TIMEISUP

Female, 26 - 35

"I worked for a NZ government department administering justice. The harassment came about due to the team leader (superior) who was employed but not within her ability to perform and grasp technical know-how.

To cover her inadequacy, I became the target of her attention and fury. Examples:

- I applied for annual leave for 1 day and was declined and was subject to long meeting with her and questioned for personal matters.
- I was physically thrown four files at 4pm and asked " to finish by tomorrow morning."
- At one point when we were alone in the same meeting room, she asked when I would hand in my letter of resignation.

I became withdrawn and didn't want to excel as by doing better would bring more punishment unto myself. I finally left the organisation after 9 months."

Male, 26 - 35

"As a young grad who's experienced sexual harassment and assault in other contexts, the persistent rumours and stories I heard throughout law school about the toxic culture of some firms was nearly enough to put me off a career in law.

It's not fair that young women like myself are being put in a position where we actively take the risk of being victimised into consideration when making career choices. It's not fair that we have in the backs of our minds the idea that legal practice may be uncomfortable simply because of our age and gender, in the culture we all know exists.

My point here is simply that even without direct experience of misconduct within the industry, the simple fact that it is so widespread hurts women outside the law, too. We shouldn't be making decisions about which jobs to apply for based on the number of horrific rumours we've heard. But we are. We shouldn't be choosing other careers because we're put off by the culture. But we are. That needs to change."

Female, 18 -25

"I have not personally experienced or witnessed sexual harassment whilst working in the legal profession in NZ (my experience in Australia is a different story). However, I have always known that it happened, and that if and when it did, there wouldn't be any repercussions for the perpetrator (usually an older, male partner). Any complaints made to HR would be swept under the carpet and largely ignored. Not surprisingly given this situation, "formal complaints" were rarely made, and the victim (usually a younger, more junior female lawyer) would simply leave the firm. Law firms are very hierarchical, and partners are all powerful. They own the business and bring in the clients and the money. They are seen as invaluable and irreplaceable whereas junior lawyers are a dime a dozen. HR teams are employed by and paid by the partnership. This huge power imbalance is, in my view, a large part of the problem. The only people who can make partners accountable for this sort of behaviour are the other partners in the firm. The change has to come from within."

Female, 26 - 35

"When I was in my early 20s I was still studying but working part time at a law firm. I was leaving a mid-winter ball at around midnight when one of the mid-level associates followed me outside. He was drunk and put his arm around me and asked me whether I was coming back to his place. I said no but he insisted and kept saying "no, you want to come home with me, come on, you know you want to" and held me tightly around the shoulders, so I thought it would just be easier to go along with it. We walked towards some taxis, and I asked him where he lived, making sure I got the actual address (about 10 minutes drive away). I opened up the back door of the taxi and put him in it, and he tried to pull me into the cab. I told him to wait, that I wanted to tell the taxi driver where we were going, so I closed the door on him, gave the taxi driver his address and \$20 from my wallet, and walked away.

The next Monday at work I emailed him, telling him I wasn't sure if he remembered the night as he was drunk but that I was a student and I needed the \$20 back. He sent it to me in the internal mail."

Female, 26 - 35

"Probably the worst sexual harassment I actually witnessed was before I was a lawyer - I was a law student in the late 90s and working as a waitress in the summer holidays. My work was hosting a convention for a group of provincial lawyers and they got very drunk, started damaging property and also harassing the female wait staff. I don't remember many details except that one lawyer threatened to shove a bottle up the a\$\$ of the waitress. I remember the other wait staff saying to me 'is this the profession you want to join?'"

Female, 36 - 45

"At a client function last year, I got chatting to a client whose file I look after. It was all friendly and normal until he said, "you might need to sleep with the judge so that we win our case". I was disgusted and horrified. "Jokes" like this are not OK. They are symptomatic of the pervading opinion among some men that women are sex objects, and are not taken seriously."

Female, 18 - 25

"I summer clerked with a major NZ law firm and commenced my legal career with the same NZ law firm. I knew it would be a challenging environment after being a Summer Clerk (and experiencing the heavy drinking culture and seedy behaviour that resulted first-hand), but I figured I could do it for a few years to get some initial experience.

In this very first job (where I started as a Law Clerk and became admitted to the Bar as a Solicitor), I was bullied by one of the senior female lawyers in the firm. The bullying arose for no apparent reason – I was told that she would find a personal issue with any attractive female in her team and I saw for myself how she played favourites among the males in her team.

I was often assigned meaningless tasks unrelated to my day-to-day job, then received patronizing and nasty comments in front of the entire team if I didn't find the answer(s) expected. She would literally yell from her office and embarrass you. On top of that, she got kicks out of intimidating young Law Clerks by ignoring them until and unless she wanted something – when, of course, you were expected to jump and say "how high?". I was constantly and often overloaded with work and had very little mentoring – just unconstructive criticism. I was so traumatized by my treatment by this woman (and other female lawyers that were her allies), I left the firm. I seriously considered quitting law altogether, but the fighting spirit within me knew I should rise above the bullshit and try a different work environment since I had worked hard to be a lawyer.

I moved to another major firm where I also witnessed bullying (of others) and general poor behaviour, including yelling, screaming and offensive language (tantrums involving feet stamping) by one particular senior lawyer on a daily basis. Because she was good at her job her unprofessional behaviour was excused and ignored. In any other non-legal environment, this horrific (and distracting) behaviour would not be tolerated and would be confronted and involve HR. Not at this firm – nobody turned a blind eye. When I questioned her behaviour soon after joining the firm I was told "oh, that's just the way she is". It does make you question whether lawyers really are all raging psychos.

I then moved overseas to broaden my legal experience and develop my career and was disappointed to find that bullying (in addition to sexual harassment) is rife in the legal profession everywhere. All you need is a supervising manager that has a personal issue with you and you are (literally) screwed – there is nowhere for you to go other than out the door when things turn pear – shaped.

I worked as a lawyer in Australia where I was again supervised by a female lawyer who got her kicks out of providing constant unconstructive criticism and nit-picked for no reason other than a different approach was taken than she personally liked. Here I also experienced being completely and utterly overloaded with work, being provided with no mentoring or guidance on tasks allocated, and being given insufficient time for completing them then having to deal with the criticism that always followed. In that role I also experienced (for the first time) being undermined and having vital information deliberately withheld. She would turn it around to make it seem as though I was the problem when in fact it was being set up to fail. It was deliberate and malicious and, after escalating the issue to no avail, left the organization.

I experienced further bullying in my next legal role in Europe, where I worked 12 hour days for several years. I would have work dumped on me at 5 – 6pm and be expected to turn it around within just a few hours. The manager thought this was acceptable because “lawyers know that long hours are expected”. It was the type of old-school behaviour you would expect to find in an office back in the 1950s, but instead we were all (in the team) subjected to it. We were not encouraged to work as a team, but to work independently and not become too friendly with each other. He saw no issue in emailing us at all hours of the night, nit-picking every aspect of our work (again subjectively, for his own personal preference), telling us every day we were “shit” and playing us all off against each other to test our loyalty. Looking back on it, it verges on psychological harassment, but you become so normalized by such behaviour you begin to consider it usual practice. As soon as I realised this was not normal and that I could not continue working under these conditions, I was perceived as a threat and it was made clear I had no further place in his team. He gave me the worst possible annual performance review and tried to terminate me. I pushed back, involved others in the organization to support me, but quickly learned that they would always back the manager and not the employee with a grievance.

For all of these reasons, I have left the practice of law. Although I miss the intellectual rigor the law provides every day and being a “trusted advisor”, I do not miss the day-to-day torment I have suffered (mostly in silence, with some support of my family and close friends from a far) or dealing with ongoing depression and anxiety issues as a result of such experiences. I am happier using my legal skills outside of legal practice, and I refuse to return to the profession unless and until it changes for the better.”

Female, 26 - 35

Friday 2 March 2018

“I have been a lawyer for nearly 30 years and the saddest thing about this blog is reading stories similar to my own experiences but noting the women involved are only in their early 20s - I had hoped things

had changed. I have been propositioned by partners, the CEO and on one occasion by a client who described in graphic detail exactly what he would like to do with me. Sadly I accepted that putting up with these approaches was simply a part of being in a male dominated environment. I loved the law enough to stick with it and to become a partner so I get to shape the environment for a new generation of lawyers.

I do also want to say though that I have worked with some outstanding men and women in the law - decent respectful people who have empowered young lawyers coming through the ranks, who have acted decisively to rebuke or remove partners who have behaved badly and who see the practice of law as a privilege. There are many of those people - most of whom don't win awards or get lauded in articles as "power" lawyers - but who simply do their jobs well. Let's stop with the glorifying of lawyers for top deals etc - it simply reinforces that this is all the profession values."

Female, 46 - 55

"A client asked me to sit on his lap and call him Daddy. I reacted negatively. I was told off by male partner because "the client always comes first."

I was being followed and watched (stalked) by a male client. I felt scared, and eventually built up the courage to tell my boss. Nothing happened.

A Partner was bragging about the number of girls that were 'teased' because he had taken them home and they turned up to work the next day in the same outfit. I told him that's inappropriate and got the wrath of his power. He no longer called me by my name, but different names to degrade me. I informed another male partner about his behaviour. "It's funny." Actually, it's disgusting."

#TimesUp

Female, 26 - 35

"I'm the wife of a lawyer. He's one of the good ones. Sadly, this sort of behaviour occurred often at his firm, yet it was tolerated, particularly when it was a senior associate with the juniors or summer clerks. The partners turned a blind eye. One particular male was known to be the worst. Having seen the way he behaved on nights out after Friday drinks, or at the mid-winter balls, I hate to think how many women have been affected by his behaviour. I only wish I had spoken up then for them; as by ignoring it, I too have played a role in this problem."

Female, 26 -35

"At a client function, a partner made a comment about a young woman who worked with us, after she left the room: "what does someone have to do to get a blow job from X around here." Client was present as were other men from the team."

Male, 26 - 35

"It has been implied/stated by men that I only got my job because I'm a pretty girl, despite being more than qualified. Partners at the law firm would get absolutely trashed at functions, get grabby, and would do inappropriate things like taking their clothes off and making inappropriate comments."
Female, 26 - 35

"I was in a lift somewhere before a law ball with a group of friends. One of my lecturers - a male Associate Professor - was standing behind me and suddenly without saying anything to me at all started running his hand up and down my waist and hip. I said nothing but got away from him as soon as the lift doors opened.

He was a known lech but it never occurred to me or my friends to say anything about it to anyone in the Law School. He's a professor there now.

It is great to have these movements teaching us that these things don't need to be 'the way it is' and finally to be listened to after all these years of thinking it is."

Female, 36 - 45

"My wish list, in increasing order of achievability:

I would like sexual harassment to be more comprehensively written into our Health and Safety legislation. We regulate a puddle of water on the ground but we don't regulate comments, actions and inactions that create an unhealthy work environment for women. This needs to be proactive rather than reactive (i.e. someone doesn't need to slip on the puddle for it to be an issue so women should not need to prove harm for an action like unsolicited comments on their bodies to be unacceptable). The onus on women to show that it impacted their career and lives before this is considered to be a big enough deal rather than women being hysterical is unfair. Partners need to be personally liable for their employees' and other partners' behaviours.

I would like sceptics of the movement to specify what kind of data/evidence they need before they are willing to accept that sexual harassment in law firms is an issue. I would also like them to have constructive suggestions before they criticise women speaking out against the status quo because the status quo has been failing women from time immemorial. In the absence of that, I would like them to admit that they are not able/willing to come up with a solution to the problem instead of paying lip service.

I would like a senior male partner to break rank and validate our experiences because we have been gaslit for so long. I know these men exist because one of them apologised to me for their fellow partners after they had sexually harassed me in front of my boyfriend and their own wives.

I cringe that I even have to preface by saying I love men, I have learned a lot from great male leaders and I have supportive male friends.

I believe:

- Men are capable of regulating their supposed innate biological predisposition to behave inappropriately around women they find attractive (which I don't think is true anyway)
- Men are able to recognise examples of inequality and bad behaviour and acknowledge of their own accord that it is unacceptable without women having to petition or prove them all the time
- Men are truly able to see women as people worthy of respect who in many situations are just trying to do their job

So let's do away with the boys-will-be-boys mentality and aim positively for a work environment that represents our high standards for ourselves and the people around us.

Thank you to all who have spoken out. #metoo"

Female, 26 - 35

"My experience in the legal profession has been incredibly sexist and unpleasant. As a summer clerk, I had my bottom grabbed by a male partner, who shot me a creepy look to go along with it. I have had my thigh touched by a male partner, who also made inappropriate comments about my body. As a graduate, I had my bottom grabbed again by another partner. This was done in full view of HR, and nothing was done about it. It happened numerous times that evening. I was very young when I experienced these physical advances and did not report them at the time. I worried that any complaints would negatively impact my career, and I still wholeheartedly believe they would have.

What affected me more than these physical advances, however, was the sexist culture within the workplace. Males my age were considered more suitable for client-based work, while as a female I was often tasked with detail-oriented work and was told it was because females were better at that type of work. Pay inequity was a real thing, and was very visible after the second year. Male colleagues were given better work, and then this was used to justify their pay rises - while I was given average work that a monkey could do, and this was then used to justify not giving me a pay rise.

A male partner made comments about my hair and lack of make-up numerous times. I was called "darling", "honey", "love" and so on. A comment was once made by a male partner about my boyfriend and our sex life; he asked me what colour my boyfriend's pubes were. For many of these experiences, there were other people around - I was not helped once by anyone around me, including HR.

The misogyny inherent in these firms is disgusting, and you can't seem to get away from it. I also know that amongst my friends, many have experienced similar physical advances and microaggressions."

Female, 26 - 35

"I have had a joke made about me - to my face and behind my back - by a Senior Partner that I could have a job if I wore a bikini.

I have been told by two seniors (including one female) that I need to change my appearance and lower my voice to be taken seriously.

Having my looks brought up constantly - "I know she doesn't look it because she's so pretty but she is a lawyer I swear".

Having a man assume I am my PA, and asking me to get myself, and after introducing myself being told - "You look more like an assistant than a lawyer."

Female, 18 - 25

"In my 2nd year I was told by a male solicitor (8 years my senior) that if I did not have sex with him, he would tell everyone that I had anyway, so I may as well just do it. He made this threat numerous times. The male senior also said that he had a very close relationship with my (male) boss and that the boss would believe anything the senior said about the work that I did. Before I left the firm, I told 3 of the partners. They said "we want you to know that we provide a safe working environment".

I know that the male solicitor has been similarly intimidating to at least one other female junior. He is still practising law."

Female, 18 - 25

"My experience is that the legal profession is incredibly sexist. I have not been harassed at work thankfully but I have definitely been in a courtroom as the only female and been entirely excluded from the other lawyers. I've also had comments made where I was in a hearing about family law and the opposing counsel, who was male, said "Why do you want to get into family law, it won't make you rich. If you want to be rich just marry a farmer." At no point had I said that I wanted to be rich, and his comment implied that the only reason I could possibly be doing law was to make money, and I would stop once I married a rich man."

Female, 26 - 35

"Similar to another poster, I suffered multiple micro-aggressions from a senior partner in my large law firm. No single incident was ever bad enough to "report", but overtime my confidence eroded and I avoided situations where I knew he would be.

An example of one of these micro-aggressions took place after the annual ball. The Monday following, the partner walked past me and said that he "enjoyed my dancing" at the event. My dancing was not inappropriate or in any way notable (a fact verified by other trusted colleagues who were dancing with me), yet this partner had obviously been watching me. This gave me the creeps.

Another example was at another work function, where him and another well-respected male partner asked me (told me?) to kiss the second partner on the cheek. I didn't want to, and said no, but they continued to try to persuade me for several minutes.

The culture is whacked, and the power systems in law firms are so different to normal companies. As a junior lawyer, you have so little power compared with the male partners. It never felt worth it to me to compromise my own position and advancement opportunities for the sake of comments that made me feel uncomfortable."

Female, 18 - 25

"It can start at law school. A law lecturer who had been mentoring me told me that he was in love with me. I told him that it wasn't okay...but he kept trying to go under the table with it. He was many years older than me. That really knocked by confidence, and since then it's made me apprehensive to visit lecturers in their office hours for help, or have anything to do with a male university lecturers. I really wish that had never happened."

Female, 18 - 25

"My view is that sexual harassment of female staff is rife within New Zealand law firms and the attitude towards female staff by the older men in firms but also many younger male staff is terrible.

As a male WASP I am exposed to the "inner circle" of sexism which even at "progressive" law firms with diversity awards etc is where the traditional over sexism has moved toward. It is alarming the difference between what these men say publicly or to the firm in general and when the group consists of only male lawyers.

I admit that I am guilty of not speaking against it but merely trying to ignoring it, but by not saying anything I am probably perpetuating the ingrained sexism in the industry and allowing this sexism to evolve into sexual harassment.

I do find it difficult to speak up or question those in power for fear of retribution, although accept that this pales in comparison to the difficulty of female staff to speak up and am not trying to compare. But by ignoring or leaving situation I have now found out that several of my colleagues have been sexually harassed in situations where if I had been more aware I could have prevented and I am apologetic for this and need to find the best ways I can help."

Male, 26 - 35

"My first firm was wonderful, never a hint of sexual impropriety. However my second firm was very different. The (sole, male) litigation partner openly admired 1950s style misogyny, where female lawyers were treated merely as decorative objects. He stated on one occasion "you spend a long time in the office, why not make it look nice?". He was well known for his philandering and for his "harem" of female staff. Even if you didn't submit to his so-called charm, there was always speculation and a taint on your reputation that maybe you had."

Female, 36 - 45

"When I was in my early 20s I worked as a legal secretary at [employer redacted]. Every Friday night was drinks upstairs on the top level for all staff to unwind from the week. There was no limit on the alcohol you drank or the cut off time to go home. Senior partners mixed happily with office juniors. There was music and dancing.

I was new to law and very innocent. I had my senior lawyer whom I worked for on a pedestal. He was happily married with a pregnant wife and a toddler at home. He had been nothing but kind and respectful to me since the first day I started working for him and we regularly shared our what we got up to on the weekend stories.

I would go to these drinks on Fridays but would stay clear of the heavy drinkers. I wasn't sure of what they doing/saying in their groups but it always looked like they were on the verge of starting a frat boys dare.

I would witness couples on the dance floor kissing and fondling that weren't couples out of work. These were partners and secretaries and so on. This was not light hearted but full on hands down skirts and blouses. It felt like a whore house at times on the dance floor, hence I always stayed away. It confused me why they were behaving like this and then come Monday everyone was sober and back to their normal selves. I reconciled that it didn't affect me. I had a drink and catch up with my friends, watching these antics from the side then go home.

Themed drinks were the worst. OMG - it practically became an orgy on those nights. You soon learnt not to go back to your desk on the lower floors as that's where they went for sex. Again, I kept my distance. The only time it really affected me was one night I went to catch the lift home. I walked out to the foyer and stumbled upon my boss in a heavy make out session with one of the women from the word processing department. I was floored. Now even this sad behaviour had reached MY boss. He saw me. We never spoke of it. Our relationship changed. He became one of them. His behaviour changed and I would regularly hear him comment to his male colleagues under his breath about female workers clothes or figures or what they would like to do to them.

I left not long after."

Female, 46 - 55

"As a junior, clients used to ask my boss if I was suitable to send along to Court as counsel because "she looks too small and sweet".

At a client function, another client (who was drunk) told me he was going to take me home and have sex with me repeatedly. The following day, after a complaint, the firm I worked for told the client that the behaviour was totally unacceptable."

Female, 26 - 35

Thursday 1 March 2018

"[Employer 1 redacted] - Senior Commercial Partner: "I don't want women working on my floor".

[Employer 2 redacted] - newly appointed female partner handed nude photograph of a woman on lounge suite (with [employer redacted] logo in corner of pic) at her first partners meeting at the firm to demonstrate how progressive the firm was re advertising."

Female, 36 - 45

"Where to start? The normalisation of sexual harassment in the NZ legal system perhaps? Luckily my employer was progressive and egalitarian but my colleagues and I were subjected to numerous inappropriate comments in court and particularly at work functions, due to the fact that we were all female. In fact a well-known publication chose to write an article about how young, female and good looking we were, ending it by acknowledging the article was sexist but publishing it anyway.

At one function a senior male lawyer referred to us a stable of fillies. Another male senior lawyer made lewd comments to me in court and he was brushed off by another female lawyer, "he's just joking" etc."

Female, 26 - 35

"Worked at a government agency doing [redacted to prevent identification of employer]. A new boss took over our office (after the previous female had to leave due to a sexual assault on a young male worker). Our new boss was ex-[employer redacted]. Within a day myself and another outspoken female were summonsed independently of all other staff to his office. He complimented us on our independence of thought and adherence to ethics. I knew things were not right. He placed me on a secondment while he took hold of my incomplete work to attempt to use the as examples of inadequate work.

On return from my secondment (where I was highly praised) he then produced my incomplete work in his office as failings to say I was unable to be professed under my annual assessment. I refused to agree to his assessment in the circumstances and refused to sign off on my review. I notified HR of the failures in that. I was ignored. My only recourse was a PG. Fatal for a lawyer! But I did it.

The agency knew my manager was a bully, but they backed him. My grievance was found in my favour, but of course I had to leave and he kept his job. My work colleagues all knew what was going on and applauded me, but were too frightened to act themselves. However, after an appalling next year of attrition and another two women taking grievances against the same boss for bullying, he was finally invited to leave, I expect with a pay-out."

Female, 36 - 45

"There needs to be some balance to these conversations. I have worked as a practising litigation lawyer for 20 years in both public and private sector, large and small organisations. I have worked with

countless men and women, senior and junior. The experiences described here and in other media should not be considered the norm. They are horrible and should be rooted out but this is not the legal profession I have long known and I am speaking from diverse experience. While I and female colleagues of mine have experienced sexism at times and disadvantages stemming from childcare obligations falling to women for the most part, sexualised comments, sexual harassment and assault are far from common experiences and should not be lightly attributed to all firms and legal work cultures. That only diminishes the severity of the experiences of those women who have actually suffered such abuse and need support."

Female, 36 - 45

"I am a female lawyer now self-employed. I came to law as an adult and from the outset experienced gender biases, despite my abilities and experience.

For a start, it became apparent as I applied following all the glossy pages of the big law firms delivered to the law school in my final year, that irrespective of my grades, I never got an interview with the large firms advertising for new graduates. Nevertheless, I told myself, those environments were not where I wanted to work to do justice and I would find proper work elsewhere. I found myself competing with women of my same age (30 something) for starting law roles with a salary around \$30.K. If I got a role I believed in, I took it. It would be experience.

Unsurprisingly I was absolutely exploited, as were my similar colleagues. My boss was actually an older female lawyer. Ultimately myself and my two female colleagues left. We informed the board of our exploitation and our employers bullying and unethical business practices. We were all blamed. Less than a year later that practice was closed by the overseeing body. However, we employees, and whistle blowers, were tarnished for our observation of our professional duties.

That is just the first job I had in law. I have had many others since. Not all of them, but most, have involved exploitation by managers/partners who are sociopaths. I have an impeccable record before the court and my clients. I work almost 7 days a week, at least 12 hours a day, I am killing myself."

Female, 46 - 55

"I'm an experienced barrister who has practiced family law for over a decade. I was humiliated and disappointed when the older male Judge interrupted my closing arguments and called me "cute, very cute". I didn't finish and the only thing I could muster up the courage to say was "thank you" before I sat down and did my absolute best not to lose it in open Court.

I hate myself for saying that."

Female, 46 - 55

"A partner tells me he feels like sex after a work meeting "How interesting", I said, "No thanks". No apology and felt incredibly uncomfortable being near him after that. Advised HR in confidence and

they suggested I had brought it on myself. Wait, what? Was so stressed about the rebuff, my ability to do the job properly went downhill.

Another partner advised me that women are [word used to describe female dog] and [word rhyming with nuts]. Charming. He got angry at me when I refused to go home with him after a function. Told HR in confidence without being too specific about the details and wouldn't you know it? I was called in to have a meeting with said sleazebag partner. That's right, high fives for breach of confidence. He of course gets to carry on his merry way, while I had to leave the job as it was intolerable. And the Law Society wonder why people leave? Comical. Chances of me holding a practising cert again equate to nil."

Female, 36 - 45

"A history of bullshit: when I was a summer clerk, one of the other (male) clerks said to me "women want a white picket fence, men want a career". That same clerk had a bad habit of putting his arm around me in a "friendly" way whenever I had the misfortune of being around him.

I was six months in to my career when I made the mistake of accepting a job at a boutique firm that, it turned out, was one of the worst places to be a woman. I'd been at the firm a week when we were discussing ideas for a theme for an upcoming party. Several male staff (including partners) laughed about how funny it would be for the men to go as famous murderers/rapists, with the women as the victims.

A male partner told me to tell opposing counsel to "stop being such a woman". That same partner sent a firmwide email referring to a new member of the Tribunal we worked in as "a classic lipstick lesbian". When we were recruiting, that partner asked me if I had any friends who wanted work, but clarified that he wanted people that "won't cause trouble". During an overnight trip for work, that partner had to be forcibly removed from the room of a female solicitor. He had to leave the firm, but it was done under secrecy and he is now running his own firm, with staff that are overwhelming young and female.

A different partner was having an affair with a solicitor the same age/experience level as me, and gave her priority for the good files. He took her to the hotel next door to our firm at lunchtimes, and at a Christmas party, he visibly put his fingers in her vagina on the dance floor in front of several staff. His teenage son did filing for us, and I can only imagine what he thought. He is still a successful partner at that firm.

I moved jobs which improved the situation, but I still experienced issues. I was the only female in the Court during a five month trial - everyone was male, from the Judge to the seven other lawyers, the defendants, the registrar). I opened the door connecting the courtroom to our war rooms for the junior member of the defence team who looked me up and down and said "oh yeah you would open the door for anyone wouldn't you?".

During a different trial, defence counsel accused me of coaching a witness. When I challenged him on that and said it was a serious allegation, he told me to stop being so sensitive.

During another, I was alone with the Judge in the courtroom. He mentioned that his next trial involved a male who alleged he had been raped by another man. He had a good laugh about that, and said "how long do you think that trial is going to go on before I abort it?".

Seven years in, I took a job at a government department. My "senior" was a man who routinely made belittling comments to me. At a Christmas party, he patted me on the head like I was a good little doggie. At another party, I saw him putting his hands all over one of our newer clients (who were from another government department). I complained to our legal manager about it, and about how he acted towards me. At the time that I made my complaint, he was already subject to "disciplinary action" for harassing one of the admin staff that sat on our floor. What that actually meant was that they moved her down two floors, and did nothing to address his behaviour. He had also called another client a lazy bitch. As far as I know, all they did with my complaint was have a short conversation with him. My manager was also open about the fact that, despite acknowledging I was better at the job, I would never be promoted to that man's level or be paid the same because "bureaucracy". When I quit, citing his behaviour as a contributing factor, my manager said maybe it would be a good idea if they just hired a man to replace me, because he would be unlikely to harass another man.

That's exactly what they did."

Female, 26 - 35

"When I was about 26 and in my first year of practice - one of the male partners (married with children and about 15 years older) smacked me on my ass at a company dinner. He apologised to me the next day and I just brushed it off. I didn't really think much about it until recently as I just thought it was one of those things. But even these types of actions are not ok."

Female, 36 - 45

"Some extracts from a document entitled "10 Most Common Style Mistakes" - originally distributed to female support staff in the Christchurch office of [employer redacted] (who also had to attend a seminar by the author), and later to all female solicitors in the Wellington office.

- Too much or not enough makeup:... No makeup at work is unprofessional. It is important to get a lesson every 5 years..."
- Wrong Underwear:...It is sleazy to see a lacy bra through any clothing. Moulded cup bras prevent nipple show."
- Poor shoes:...Do not totally compromise looks for comfort."
- Inappropriate for context: ...Cleavage is only suitable for bars, the beach and attracting a partner. Legs are fine for sport, bars, dancing and modelling."
- Focal points:...Remember belts accentuate the waist. "

At the same firm, only the male graduates were invited to play golf tournaments to network with other lawyers/clients, and told "if you don't go to it will jeopardise your career."

Male graduates were automatically paid a higher salary in second year."

Female, 26 - 35

"I was finishing off a fixed-term graduate internship and was in the process of looking at my next steps. I found myself at a prestigious conference dinner full of partners and senior lawyers. A woman I had just met introduced me to a few partners when she found out I was looking for a job. One partner I spoke to (who I presumed was in his sixties as he mentioned his impending retirement) in between giving me career advice threw several comments about my appearance, "your body is so curvy," "you're so hot" "is everyone in your team hot?" I just kept changing the subject as I didn't want to "jeopardise" my career.

Sometime later, a senior lawyer, whose team just won an award for best in-house team, came up to me and put his hand on my back and then moved it down to my ass. He hadn't even introduced himself. His face is imprinted in my mind. All I could do was walk away."

Female, 26 - 35

"I believe very strongly in this movement - this is incredibly hard for me to write. As a male, I have been sexually propositioned twice in my career - both times in my office, both times by separate but both confident and determined young women much younger and junior than me. Both times I don't believe I did anything to suggest their advances would be welcome. They were very distressing experiences for me and have caused me significant anxiety over the years. I rejected both advances/propositions but felt I had to do so in the softest way possible safe in the knowledge that if they got upset and accused me of anything my career would be over.

No one would ever believe that an older more senior man would be propositioned by a young attractive woman - let alone complain about it. I had to pretend to be always happy and jovial around them (they were years apart) and worked incredibly hard never to be in the situation of having to critique their work or remotely look as though I was singling them out. I felt trapped and disgusted and I became paranoid about it. I felt constantly under threat of everything coming to an end for me. I couldn't complain - I just had to pretend everything was fine. To this day I go over my actions to see if I had done anything to suggest to them that I would say yes to advances. I am friendly and engaging (like to be) but always appropriate. No one should ever be put in a situation like this."

Male, 46 - 55

"A senior lecturer at the law school I attended was well known for making female students uncomfortable. I saw him after the course had ended in a cafe one day and he beckoned me over. He gave me a hug which went on for an uncomfortably long time. He then said to me that he could do this now that he was no longer my lecturer and that I looked "delicious" from the other side of the room. I was mortified. When I told my male colleagues they just laughed and thought it was a bit of fun. They simply don't understand that speaking up or challenging this behaviour could ruin your

career. There is a huge power imbalance by young people in the profession and their seniors take full advantage of this. I have since stopped practising."

Female, 26 - 35

"Too many to list... constantly having my looks be brought up, inappropriate questions about my sex life / boyfriends. Soooo many "jokes" and rude stuff.

Every girl being ranked by a "number". Being belittled in-front of clients. Being told the way I speak was "girly". Being told that being attractive meant I wouldn't be taken seriously.

Being touched and awful things said to me. So sad that many young women have to go through this."

Female, 18 - 25

"As a senior lawyer in a national law firm I received unwanted attention from a new CEO. It started with some comments about my legs, which I shut down and brushed off as misguided 'compliments'. He seemed to be 'around' a lot - and friendly/chatting - which I put down to him being new, but a bit unusual. Then, during a senior meeting, I noticed him staring at me, which I deliberately but politely ignored. Not long after this I got a call from him. At first it was general chit chat, but then he said that he always noticed my car was in early (this made me wonder how he knew which car was mine - and it made me feel 'watched'), and then he proceeded to ask me about my hair - which he said he had been 'noticing', and in particular whether I wore my hair down when I went to bed. I told him I didn't think I should have to answer that - but he persisted. I ended up feeling that I had to answer to make him stop. I got off the phone and was gobsmacked, It was creepy and intrusive, and it made me feel unclean that he had obviously been thinking about me in bed. I stared out the window and worried that I was overreacting.

I told a senior female colleague to 'test' my response. She was horrified, so I took it to the firm's senior partner. I was clear I didn't want to complain (didn't want to rock the boat), but said the CEO needed to know it was unacceptable behaviour, and I didn't want him behaving in this way towards junior lawyers, who might not feel able to raise it.

The senior partner later told me that he had had a 'blokey chat' with him, and 'as you do' asked the CEO if he found any of the female staff 'hot' or whether he 'fancied' anyone - which he denied. The partner then asked him "what about [insert my name here]" - at which the CEO apparently went bright red, and the senior partner told me "I knew I had him". The CEO was apparently "mortified" and "embarrassed" about the whole thing. I told the partner that I could not believe that is how he chose to deal with it - which he accepted, with hindsight, was probably inappropriate too. It was a 'boys will be boys' response.

I accept that this is not the worst thing that could happen, but it affected me. I felt diminished by it, and the response to it - although at the time I just put it behind me. But, it is telling that I stopped wearing 'nice' stockings, I cut my long hair off, I began to feel really nervous about going to meetings in case he was there, I felt 'creeped out' in the carpark. I was self-conscious that other partners might

have been told - and worried that they were leering or laughing about it, I had a new awareness that this was (apparently) the sort of thing that was talked about by senior male partners - who is hot, who fancies who.

The CEO didn't come near me again - but in such an exaggerated way (practically running the other way) that I was worried others would notice it was somehow related to me. While I didn't formally complain - and I didn't ask for an apology - I am still amazed that he had the guts behave like that, but no guts to apologise. I left the firm not long after this - after many happy years, and not because of this incident. The majority of people (men and women) that I have worked with have been fantastic. However, I worry about the quiet pervasiveness of inappropriate and sexualised behaviour. It has been 'tolerated' by women, and in some cases minimised by those (usually senior men) who sit at the tables that can influence real change."

Female, 36 - 45

Wednesday 28 February 2018

"When I was a 3rd year solicitor working at a government department, my manager at the time made a comment about a rash on my neck, I was slightly embarrassed and did not respond.

My manager then proceeded to announce loudly to my entire team that I had a hicky on my neck and he started laughing. This was very humiliating for me because the announcement was made to the team in a large open plan office space where the "announcement" could be heard by everyone around, including other male employees and senior managers (who were also male).

I did not make a complaint to the HR department at the time because I was too embarrassed by the situation. Furthermore, I had only been working at the government department for about 6 months so did not feel like I could complain about my manager's behaviour and it would be career limiting. I also felt that the HR department wouldn't take my complaint seriously as they would view it as "minor".

I eventually did tell HR maybe about 6-8 months later but because I left it too late nothing could be done about it. In retrospect, I wish I had spoken up about it sooner. I would definitely not have let something like that slide if I was in the same situation again."

Female, 26 - 35

"I have been following all the articles about the RMV scandal and think this is a much wider issue than just one firm or even one industry. However that being said the legal industry needs to step up now if it's to hope to continue to attract (let alone retain) talented females.

The level of "banter" in the big firm I used to work at was similar to what I would have expected in a rugby locker room. I became so frustrated and irritated by constant chatter that I was unable to do my work to the best of my ability.

I don't think any individuals alone can be blamed for allowing this to continue - there needs to be some sort of responsibility on firms to make their workplaces an enjoyable and inclusive place to work where people feel safe, respected and supported regardless of their gender."

Female, 26 - 35

"Stories of sexual harassment and the prevailing misogynistic attitudes in the big firms turned me off pursuing a legal career in New Zealand. Thankfully, I work in a unionised government department overseas where employment decisions are based on merit, there is no issue of pay inequality, and there are procedures in place to deal with harassment in the workplace. It's unfair that many women do not feel safe in their place of work. It's time to stop accepting this behaviour as the norm and brushing it under the carpet."

Female, 26 - 35

"I've been following the RMV story like a hawk and have been thinking about what I can do within my areas of expertise (HR and law) to raise awareness of harassment within the workplace. It's a dirty secret that so many of us have borne witness to.

I can see the issue from an HR perspective. HR practitioners are taught to align their objectives and department goals with their organisation's objectives and goals. Obviously a key goal of most organisations is to make a profit. Partners bring in the cash...HR will never truly support the needs of employees if the needs clash with the organisation's needs.

I think there needs to be an independent third party where employees across a range of organisations (in-house and firms) can confidently discuss topics which have traditionally been taboo i.e. pay equality, pay equity, sexual harassment, sexual abuse etc.

The stakes are so high for young women in our industry and it's appalling so many men in powerful positions (not only in their firm but also in the community) take advantage. Oh, I could talk for hours about this! I'm definitely keen to put my hand up and contribute to conversations about this issue. My HR colleagues are equally concerned but are caught between a rock and a hard place. This #metoo campaign has made me so determined as a mum of boys to put my hand up and say enough is enough."

Female, 26 - 35

"Regularly called "darling" by older men in the profession, had inappropriate comments made about my body and how it looks. It's the microaggressions that add up!"

Female, 26 - 35

"I summer clerked at [employer redacted] a few years ago. The Christmas party was themed and my costume involved having a pair of metal toy handcuffs around one of my wrists. One of the male

partners in the firm approached me to dance, grabbed the handcuff and cuffed himself to me. I had a drink in my other hand so could not remove the handcuffs (there was nowhere to place the drink and I was worried about offending the partner if I said I didn't want to be cuffed to him). This was in the middle of the dance floor.

I was incredibly uncomfortable by my inability to leave (he wasn't super close but was dancing with me) and was worried that it would affect my reputation at the firm. One of the other female summer clerks approached me after a while, undid the handcuff and pulled me off to 'dance'. Once we were away from the partner she said something to the effect of "you looked like you needed saving". No one else said or did anything. [Redacted to prevent identification of employer]. Certainly it seems he had a reputation for targeting young women."

Female, 18 - 25
