

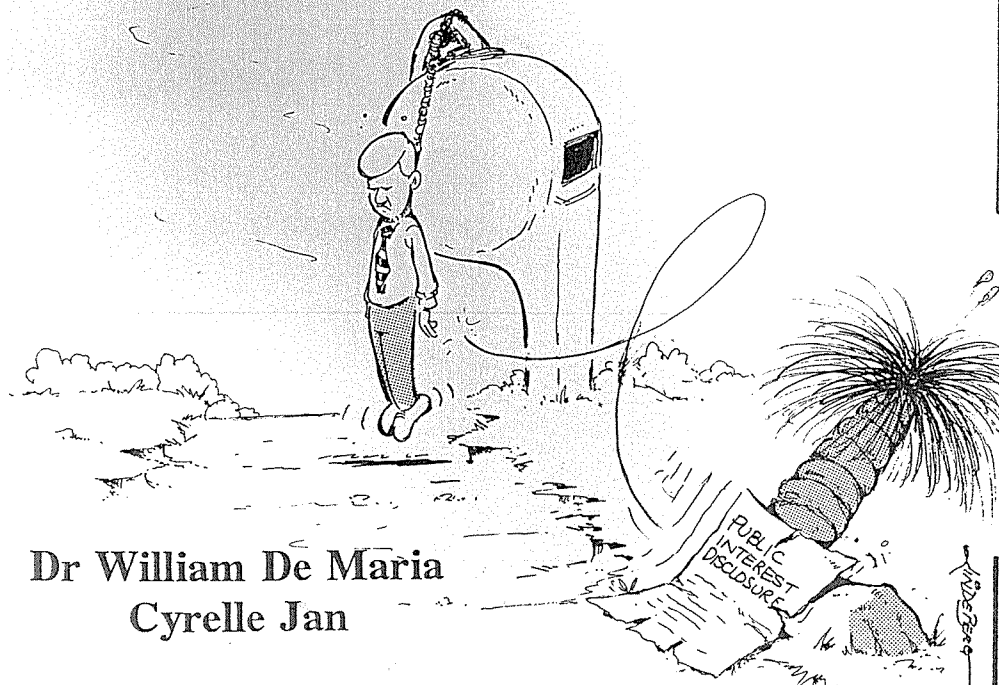


THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL POLICY

Queensland Whistleblower Study
Result Release Two

Wounded Workers



Dr William De Maria
Cyrelle Jan

University of Queensland
Department of Social Work and Social Policy

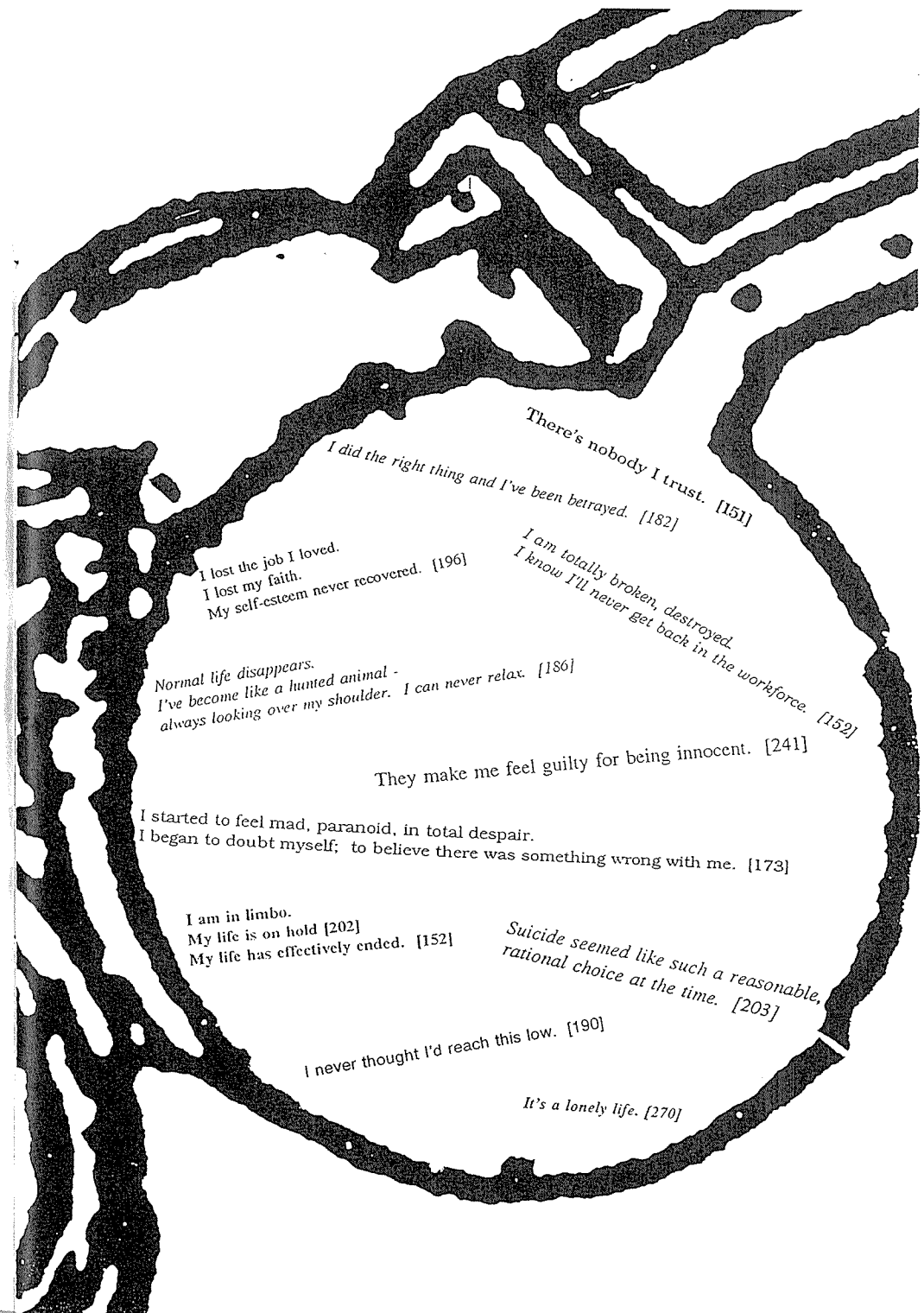
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Dr William De Maria
Cyrelle Jan

Result Release Two
October 1994

Reprisals
Financial Effects
Physical and Emotional Effects
Value Profile and Value Changes



There's nobody I trust. [151]

I did the right thing and I've been betrayed. [182]

I lost the job I loved.
I lost my faith.
My self-esteem never recovered. [196]

I am totally broken, destroyed.
I know I'll never get back in the workforce. [152]

Normal life disappears.
I've become like a hunted animal -
always looking over my shoulder. I can never relax. [186]

They make me feel guilty for being innocent. [241]

I started to feel mad, paranoid, in total despair.
I began to doubt myself; to believe there was something wrong with me. [173]

I am in limbo.
My life is on hold [202]
My life has effectively ended. [152]

Suicide seemed like such a reasonable,
rational choice at the time. [203]

I never thought I'd reach this low. [190]

It's a lonely life. [270]

RELEASE TIMETABLE

In conjunction with the Whistleblower Action Group (Qld) Inc the research results from the Queensland Whistleblower Study will be provisionally released according to the following timetable.

<u>Result Release One:</u>	Whistleblower Demographics Occupational Profiles Wrongdoing Analysis Evaluation of Government Responses	April 1994
<u>Result Release Two:</u>	Reprisals Financial Effects Physical and Emotional Effects Work Value Profiles and Work Value Changes	October 1994
<u>Result Release Three:</u>	Whistleblowing and The Law	November 1994
<u>Result Release Four:</u>	Family Impact Study	November 1994
<u>Result Release Five:</u>	Impact of Whistleblowing on Workplace Operations (self-evaluation) Impact of Whistleblowing on Future Opportunities to Disclose.	December 1994
<u>Result Release Six:</u>	Non-Whistleblower Study	March 1995

If either senior officers and/or politicians are involved in misconduct or corruption, the task of exposure becomes impossible for all but the exceptionally courageous or reckless, particularly after indications that such disclosures are not only unwelcome but attract retribution.

Tony Fitzgerald
Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Possible Illegal Activities and Associated Police Misconduct, 1989, p. 133

Sometimes the only alternative to cringing before a parched collective is to commit an act drenched in courage.

Clarissa Pinola-Estes
Women who Run with the Wolves, p.241

It does seem to be rather important to know that even when we should break the silence, our natural inclination is to wait for someone else to act first, to "prove" that action is called for. No wonder whistleblowers are so few and far between.

Hugh Mackay
Weekend Australian
9-10 July 1994.

WHISTLEBLOWERS

Action Group (QLD) INC.



*Defending the right
to live by integrity.*

14.9.94

FOREWORD TO WOUNDED WORKERS

I am very grateful for the opportunity to write the FOREWORD to this second Queensland whistleblower Study research report. My first-hand experience of the fear and the hurt which lies behind these frightful statistics enables me to relate personally to the saga which unfolds in these pages.

The memory of the punishing reprisals I suffered for simply doing my job and telling the truth as I saw it needed no refreshing, but by reading about the experiences of other whistleblowers I realized that their scars are as permanent as my own.

Dr. William De Maria's whistleblower research has been invaluable in highlighting the similarity in the pattern of whistleblowing reprisals and the extent of the suffering which results when honest employees expose workplace wrongdoing.

The reprisals to which whistleblowers are subjected often far exceed human endurance and can bring even the strongest person to the brink of collapse. One of the most devastating reprisals whistleblowers can suffer is to be removed from the workforce and then blacklisted, thus being deprived of their basic right to work. However, perhaps equally punishing is to be allowed to remain in the workforce but being subjected to the alienation of daily ostracism. I found this to be even harder to cope with than the punitive transfers to hostile worksites, the continued attempts to lure me to isolated locations and the overt death threats.

One of the most positive outcomes of the Queensland Whistleblower Study has been the formation of the Whistleblowers Action Group. WAG has given Queensland whistleblowers the strength and the renewed hope that comes from joining with others. But WAG is not only offering support to individual whistleblowers, it is also furthering the cause of exposing and eliminating workplace wrongdoing. My active involvement with WAG over the past year has revitalized me and increased my enthusiasm and determination for the task ahead.

Colin Dillon

Colin Dillon
President

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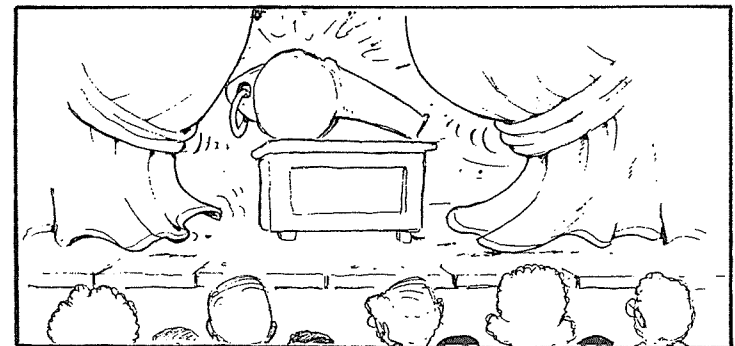
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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

Researching the Whistleblower

Between February 1993-March 1994 a sophisticated location strategy was put in place to encourage current and ex-Queensland public servants who had made public interest disclosures on alleged workplace wrongdoing in the 1990-1993 period, to come forward and participate in a research study being conducted at the University of Queensland. This involved press releases, advertisements in union journals, bills posted in public places, and a newspaper advertisement (reproduced below).



WHISTLEBLOWERS!

HAVE YOU COME ACROSS SOMETHING AT WORK THAT YOU DON'T THINK IS RIGHT?

For example:

- taxpayers money being wasted
- do you claim to be victimised because of your gender, sexual preference, colour, personal values?
- are accountability arrangements at work breaking down and giving certain people too much unanswerable power?

If you are:

- a Queensland State or Local Government employee (including commissions and authorities)

And if you have:

- Complained to a superior about some wrong-doing
- Complained to an external investigator (police, CJC, Ombudsman, politician, PSMC)
- Gone to the media, or some other public forum

THEN PLEASE CONTACT US.

We have no authority to further investigate your complaint. Rather we want to know about the process you were in; how it started, what impact you have made, what retribution has occurred.

NON-WHISTLEBLOWERS!

We would also like to talk to you if you have seen official wrong-doing but have not reported it. We are interested to know why you did not act.

For example, were you prevented from reporting the wrong doing because:

- your job was not secure.
- you had no faith in the internal/external complaints mechanisms.
- you fear harassment, or reprisals for doing so.
- of the lack of support.

THEN PLEASE CONTACT US.

If you help us by coming forward, you will be contributing to a better understanding of the whole whistleblower process, which will allow the research team to make accurate findings about avenues currently available to whistleblowers and to recommend the development of appropriate protection and support.

Remember it is all confidential. Many people have come forward so far and their privacy has been respected. You control how much information you give to us. There is also a whistleblowers support movement that you may like to join.

If you decide to help us you can contact Tony Keyes, the senior research assistant with the whistleblower project, by phone or in writing at any time. Tony is a solicitor with a good deal of experience in dealing with confidential source of information. Tony can be contacted on (07) 365-1846 or leave a message on (07) 365-2634 or (07) 365-1253.

Dr William De Maria (Principal Researcher)

QUEENSLAND WHISTLEBLOWER PROJECT

The overwhelming response to this invitation was increased when the study conducted Australia's first 008 whistleblower phone-in, in March 1993. After meticulous screening (with sample rejection rates running as high as 30%) respondents had administered to them a 99 item questionnaire, referred to as **Schedule A**. This questionnaire was very detailed, and through a mixture of closed (70%) and open questions (30%), original knowledge was obtained in the following areas:

- (i) **demographics;** age, sex, qualifications, relationships, home and work locations.
- (ii) **work values;** including values shifts caused by whistleblowers experiences.
- (iii) **occupational;** current position, duties, career moves, evaluation of workplace decision making.
- (iv) **wrongdoing;** details.
- (v) **correction process;** description/evaluation of response from superiors, external agencies and media.
- (vi) **response expectation;** of superiors, external agencies and media.
- (vii) **self-evaluation;** whistleblowing impact on departmental operations.
- (viii) **official reprisals;** details.
- (ix) **unofficial reprisals;** details.
- (x) **household income;** effect of whistleblowing.
- (xi) **personal well-being;** effect of whistleblowing.
- (xii) **partners;** effect of disclosures on relationship.
- (xiii) **children;** effects of whistleblowing.
- (xvi) **future chances of whistleblowing;** effect of previous PIDs.
- (xvii) **style of future whistleblowing;** effects of previous and current PIDs.

(xviii) **respondent advice** to would-be whistleblowers.

(xix) **respondent advice** about improvements in departmental procedures.

(xx) **respondents' views** about whistleblower support, before, during and after PID.

N.B. PID means Public Interest Disclosures.

Over 100 whistleblowers are in the sample for **Schedule A**. To meet a release deadline this report analyses the results when the sample reached 102, with respect to items (viii), (ix), (x) and (xi).

ACHIEVING A TRUE SAMPLE

Finally, a note on the sample. The only people who could get into our study were current or ex-bureaucrats who had dissented in the public interest. We achieved sample purity by setting up a contact filter, administered to all prospective respondents at the initial interview. This filter had ten elements to it:

1. **Self-Initiated:** The disclosure process must be by the whistleblower. This rules out reporting processes initiated on behalf of whistleblowers, such as a union taking over a matter from one of its members who remains anonymous. The members' disclosure to the union could qualify as a whistleblowing act. That act usually finishes at the point of union intervention. After that the act is best understood as union advocacy or representation, but not whistleblowing.
2. **Free-Will:** This self-initiated process must be done as a **free act** of conscience. This rules out situations whereby people are directed by superiors, committees of inquiry and courts to disclose information that they would not have normally disclosed without pressure.
3. **Direct Perception:** The subject or content of disclosure must have been **directly perceived** by the whistleblower. This rules out disclosure processes governed by hearsay. We expect that whistleblowers will

have first hand, initiate, primary knowledge of matters that they judge as wrong.

4. **Direct Connection:** In addition to a direct perception of wrongdoing, there must also be a **direct connection** between the disclosure act and the role through which the knowledge of wrongdoing was obtained. This is a particularly pertinent provision when dealing with public servant whistleblowers. In a nutshell the content of their disclosures must be obtained through their public sector roles.
5. **Retroaction:** Whistleblowing draws attention to their past and present wrongdoing. It is not a future focused process. It is not an act of whistleblowing, in other words, to call attention to a service that is needed or an act that should be done unless these matters can be traced back to a previous commitment enshrined in law or policy.
6. **Genuine Belief:** The whistleblower must be driven by a **genuine belief** that what has been perceived breaches some standard, custom, or moral convention that is codified in law, regulation or common practice. This is not to say that the whistleblower's observations have to be correct. Only that he or she must, at the time of disclosure, believe that they are.
7. **Substantive Wrongdoing:** The disclosure must point to a **substantive wrongdoing**. Executive over-rule of a committee decision to curtail a waiting room in pink clearly lacks substance (unless it is indicative or part of a deeper malaise). What constitutes substantive wrongdoing is a difficult if not sometimes impossible question to answer. In a nutshell we think substantive wrongdoing insults significant values. The test may be, if it is worth hiding it is worth disclosing.
8. **Open Revelation:** The disclosure of wrongdoing must be **open** (as distinct from public). Wrongdoing must not be construed as private knowledge. It must be disclosed through an act of communication to a second party with an action auspice (see point 9). In other words, the whistleblower must communicate, not ruminate. Additionally, this communication to a second party must be done in such a way that the second party obtains a workable understanding of the wrongdoing. It is a workable understanding in the sense that if the second party fails to act it will not be for lack of information from the whistleblower.

9. **Action Auspice:** The whistleblower must communicate with a second party that has an **official brief to investigate the complaint and right the wrong** (or at least have a corrective role to play). A disclosure to a priest, spouse or stranger does not therefore constitute an act of whistleblowing.
10. **Motivation:** The total, primary, or predominant reason in making a disclosure is that the disclosure is in the public interest. This excludes disclosures to even a score, obtain an advantage (informants seeking prosecutorial immunity), or those seeking a personal redress (e.g. promotions appeal).

In organising these ten elements together we come up with a clumsily worded working definition of whistleblowing:

The whistleblower is a concerned citizen, totally, or predominantly motivated by notions of public interest, who initiates of her or his own free will, an open disclosure about significant wrongdoing directly perceived in a particular occupational role, to a person or agency capable of investigating the complaint and facilitating the correction of wrongdoing.

FIRST RESEARCH REPORT

In April 1994 the first research report from the Queensland Whistleblower Study was released. One hundred and fifty copies were published and by the end of June only a few copies remained unsold. The popularity of the study is evidence of the growing interest in the phenomenon of whistleblowing. In the same time frame a number of papers, based on research knowledge from the study were presented at various conferences and meetings throughout Australia.

¹ As well the study elicited a good deal of media interest.²

The first research report was entitled **Unshielding the Shadow Culture**.³ It focussed on the demographics of whistleblowers, occupational profiles of the sample, an analysis of 299 separate acts of alleged wrongdoing reported, and finally an evaluation of government responses to disclosures made in the public interest.

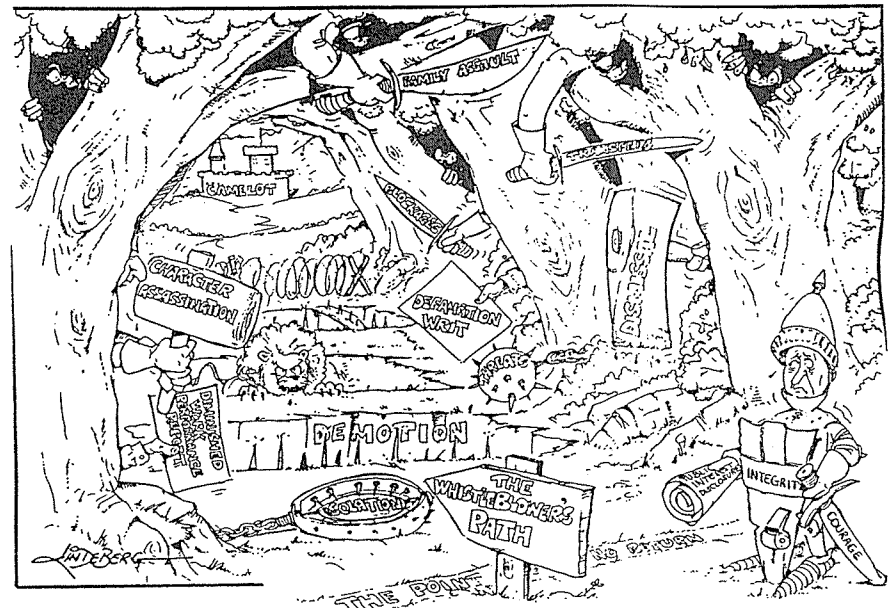
It is a fair commentary on this report to say that it clearly presents evidence that a powerful series of paradoxes lie at the heart of the whistleblower issue. The first paradox concerns a co-existence between a minority of workers driven by conscience and a majority of workers driven by self interest, fear, and expediency. Another paradox concerns the co-existence of a small population of highly stressed whistleblowers within work contexts that thrive on a false aura of harmony and teamwork. The third paradox gets to the heart of bureaucratic ineffectiveness; diligent whistleblowers taking their concerns to obstructive and/or incompetent investigating authorities. Through resource starvation, jurisdictional narrowness, red tape, sheer incompetence and/or more sinister motives such as protecting the "good" name of the department and maintaining the status quo for the ruling administrative elite, these authorities outpace the diligent whistleblower. The final paradox buried within this data is perhaps the most poignant of them all; private citizens acting in the public interest. This first research report is about to be reprinted and is currently available.⁴

SECOND RESEARCH REPORT

This report (the second in the series), **Wounded Workers**, will focus on the reprisals that whistleblowers faced, the financial effects of making public interest disclosures, how whistleblowing affects physical and emotional well-being and finally how whistleblowing impacts on the personal work values of those who make public interest disclosures. Through examining whistleblowers' socio-economic situation, the reasons they give for those reprisals they regarded as the worst, and their shift in work values as a result of their whistleblowing experiences, we can begin to build up a profile of the type of person who make up this small but significant section of the workforce.

The cartoons in this report were drawn by Kevin Lindeberg.

REPRISALS



REPRISALS

Whistleblowing is a war zone but the wounds are all internal. [247]

[My boss said to me] If you don't want to [participate in the wrongdoing] then come up and talk to me about your future. [266]

This is a major section of the report because it provides a rare glimpse of the profile of punishment handed out to whistleblowers. This section is also important because the data made us go back to the definition of whistleblowing (p.5) and conclude that we had failed to specify a vital component, namely reprisals. We know from the first report that the whistleblowers left reprisals out too. In other words they generally did not expect personal attacks when they disclosed workplace wrongdoing. The only expectation the sample really entertained was a confidence that management would run with their disclosures and correct the wrongdoing.⁵ This section however reports on 596 alleged workplace reprisals suffered by members of the sample. This failure to anticipate the dangers inherent in whistleblowing tells us a great deal about the whistleblower psyche, their collective conception of the act of disclosure, and the beliefs they retain in the integrity of the system of government. Whistleblowers usually don't "see" reprisals when they choose to act because they conceptualise their disclosures in un-dramatic and civic terms as just "doing one's duty". The failure to anticipate danger seems to be also intimately tied up with an abiding faith in the inherent benevolence of public sector administration.

This failure to anticipate reprisals indicates that whistleblowers are perhaps different from the rest of the public sector workforce. We know from a recent study of 1313 New South Wales public servants by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) that 74% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "People who report corruption are likely to suffer for it."⁶ In other words a majority of the ICAC sample anticipated that reprisals would follow reporting. While we do not know whether they were talking personally (i.e. if I report wrongdoing, I will suffer reprisals) or generally, about the nature of the public sector, the ICAC result is further evidence that whistleblowers can be understood as a distinct group within the public sector workforce.

The whistleblowers may also be different in the way the (unexpected) reprisals do not intimidate them into future silence. About 80% of our sample when asked, "Knowing now what happened when you blew the whistle, would you make a public interest disclosure again?", said "Yes".

So we appear to have attracted to the study public sector employees who exposed workplace wrongdoing **and** suffered reprisals, in spite of the fact that reprisals were not listed as one of the qualifying criteria for inclusion in the sample. This forced us to distinguish this group from those in the workplace who won't report wrongdoing for fear of reprisals and those who report wrongdoing but do not suffer reprisals, such as auditors. These people have a clear statutory duty to report workplace wrongdoing, and unless the system goes terribly wrong, they do not suffer reprisals for doing their duty. We do not think this group are whistleblowers.

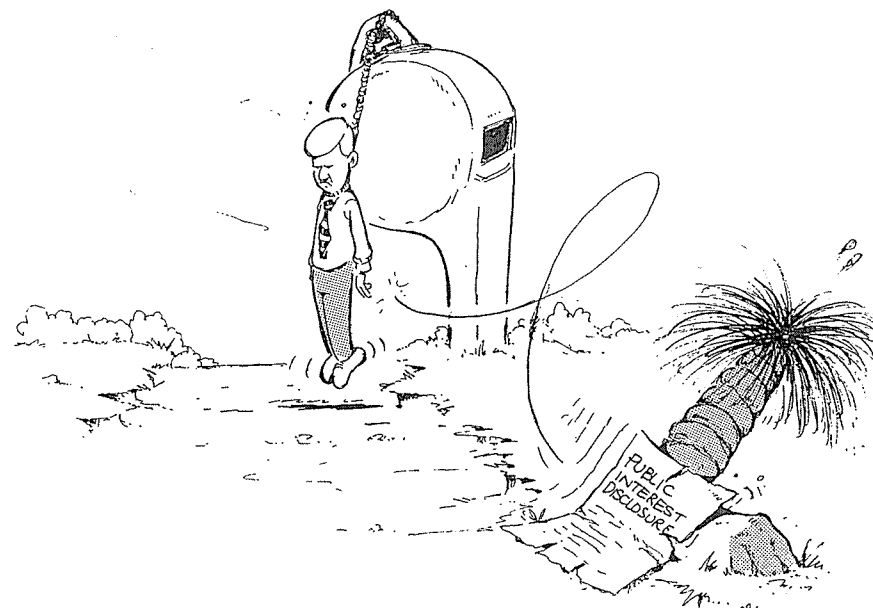
The definition of whistleblowing that we developed (see p.7) makes no mention of reprisals. Nor do most of the definitions in the literature.⁷ We now think that the existence of reprisal is an important component in the definition. In other words we think that one must actually suffer reprisals to earn the title "whistleblower".

Double-Barrelled Reprisals

Our examination of workplace reprisals on whistleblowers was divided into two phases to accommodate the dual nature of workplace retaliation. Whistleblowers face what we call **official** and **unofficial** reprisals. Official retaliation is a vindictive process of organisational payback whereby the whistleblower is punished for speaking out. This punishment is veiled behind policy and procedure in order to avoid the charge of illegality (particularly the charge of victimisation). Actions such as selective redundancy and poor performance reviews, along with many other strategies, constitute what we call official reprisals. Usually the connection between official reprisals and the whistleblowers' actions are camouflaged to all bar the whistleblowers and workplace superiors who orchestrate the reprisals. Unofficial reprisals rely less on adverse reaction which can be legally or procedurally justified, and more on workplace interactions which are hard to investigate because the offending action is either ambiguous, subtle or deniable. Workplace ostracism is the paradigm example here. Ostracism is not illegal and there are no public sector procedures that ban or even discourage it. Yet ostracism is a favourite reprisal option.

Official Reprisals

Response	Number of Whistleblowers	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=102)*
Yes	72	71
No	30	29
* In the tables throughout this report capital N refers to the number of whistleblowers and lower case n refers to the number of relevant occurrences.		



Type of Official Reprisals

Official Reprisals	Number of Reprisals	Percent of Reprisals (n=158)*	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=72)
Reprimanded	28	18	39
Punitively transferred	22	14	31
Compulsorily referred to psychiatrist/counsellor	16	10	22
Threatened with: punitive transfer, retrenchment, dismissal, legal action	13	8	18
Career advancement halted ⁺	13	8	18
Dismissed	12	8	17
Official investigation obstructed ⁺⁺	7	4	10
Retrenched, position made redundant	7	4	10
Charged or sued	6	4	8
Demoted	6	4	8
Work performance reporting used as form of harassment ^o	4	3	6
Suspended	3	2	4
<u>Other</u> Essential work resources withdrawn "Kept in the dark" Offered payment with silence condition Earned demerit Internal investigation used as form of harassment [■] Support funds denied Contract tenders continually rejected Promoted in attempt to bribe whistleblower Department ignored complaint Attempt by immediate superior to punish whistleblower (overruled by head office) Denied appeal rights Grievances lodged Reported over trivial or contested matters Option withdrawn to continue employment after training period	21	13	29
* Multiple answers permitted. + Includes position reclassified and whistleblower (previous incumbent) unsuccessful in application; permanency threatened, blacklisted for promotion. ++ Includes obstruction of FOI request, destruction of records, and investigation results ignored. o Includes threat to bring work performance report forward or backwards in time. ■ Includes allegation of psychiatric harassment.			

Discussion

We examined a total of 158 alleged official reprisals taken against 72 members of the sample. Formal reprimand was the most popular form of official reprisal, constituting 18% of all reprisals, and suffered by almost 40% of the 72 whistleblowers. We suggest that the popularity of the reprimand strategy is tied up with its shock value. The last thing whistleblowers expect after 'doing the right thing' is to be castigated by superiors. In these reprimand sessions whistleblowers are sent clear signals that they have misread the dominant public sector culture with its requirement of loyalty. Reprimand is also popular because it is a cheap form of reprisal, being easily organised and speedily executed.

Although we did not pursue the matter in the study, we presume that file notes or reports were usually generated on these occasions, to stand as permanent black marks against the whistleblower. Again a matter not pursued empirically, but something that we have a good deal of anecdotal information on, concerned the oft heard complaint that those formal reprimands often constitute miscarriages of natural justice in the sense that investigation procedures were either not followed, or followed with a single minded purpose of attacking the whistleblower. We were also told that whistleblowers often felt intimidated by these reprimands.

Punitive transfers were the second most common form of official reprisal, accounting for 14% of all official reprisals. The transfer data does not include requested transfers or transfers suggested by management with the welfare of the whistleblower in mind (to ease office tension for example). The transfers here are punitive movements driven by a calculating motive to punish the whistleblower. They encompass geographical relocation (e.g. from Brisbane to the "Back of Burke"), as well as inter-departmental and intra-departmental movements. We were often told that the transfers carried a very heavy stress and adjustment load for the whistleblowers and their families. Recent research into work stress carried out by Comcare found that forced relocation and redeployment were frequently reported as precipitating events which led to stress-related claims.⁸ Research also indicates that even when transfers are part of career advancement, and agreed to by the worker, they are still capable of producing a good deal of stress.⁹ This being the case, punitive transfers instantly offer the whistleblower a double dose of stress because transfers, tense experiences in themselves, increase as sources of stress when the move has no calculated career advantage for the whistleblower, but is inspired by vindictiveness.

The next most common form of official reprisal involved compulsory referrals to a psychiatrist, and in some cases to a psychologist, social worker or other professional whose views on workers' behaviour were acceptable to management. Although psychiatric referrals are not considered by whistleblowers as amongst the worst form of official reprisals, we nevertheless know from our discussions with them, that this form of reprisal, whereby their very sanity is brought into question, is intolerable to these people because behavioural assessment has a pernicious way of striking at the heart of their motivation. Such interventions by psychiatrists reframe and soil this public spirited motivation by releasing negative judgements and innuendos about the whistleblower's state of mind.

Compulsory referral for behavioural assessment is a particularly savage form of organisational attack. For a start the compulsory nature of the referral exposes the whistleblower to a no-win situation. If the whistleblower refuses to be behaviourally assessed, he or she invites further negative attention by management for refusing to obey lawful orders. This type of refusal could also give rise to the view that the whistleblower has some hidden personality disorder that they fear the psychiatric assessment will uncover.

If the whistleblower submits to assessment, the attitude they have to the assessing process and the assessor will have strong bearing on the diagnostic outcome. The whistleblower who feels a rapport with the assessor and opens up on personal feelings, has no control over how those feelings are documented by the assessor, no control over who gets to read the report, and certainly no control over being reported out of context. It is important to note that the assessor's client is the referring department, not the whistleblower. This allows assessors to feel no primary ethical obligation of care, privacy and professional duty towards the whistleblower. Regrettably this is a point often not comprehended by the whistleblower until it is too late.

While on this point it is noteworthy that the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Medical Association has recently adopted new ethical standards specific to the issue of forced referral of whistleblowers.¹⁰ These new standards have been flatly rejected by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists who are advising its fellows to ignore the new guidelines.¹¹ Regrettably, but predictably the Federal Council of the AMA has backed off supporting the compassionate guidelines produced by its New South Wales Branch.¹² This unsatisfactory state of affairs was the subject of special comment by the Senate Select Committee on Public Interest Whistleblowing. In bringing down its report on 31 August 1994 it

recommended that the medical profession settle guidelines which expressly describe the ethical obligations of medical practitioners, especially psychiatrists.¹³

Returning to the practice of assessment harassment, every now and then a whistleblower is assessed by someone who does not completely fit the picture outlined above. Recently one of the whistleblowers, a female Sergeant of Police, was suspended by the Commissioner of Police, and ordered to undergo psychiatric assessment. The psychiatrist, nominated by the Queensland Police Service, reported:

I am of the opinion that there is no evidence of any psychiatric disorder or mental infirmity of any kind which would render Ms..... in any way incapable of carrying out her duties as a police officer.¹⁴

The events leading up to and surrounding this action may appear to confirm that psychiatry and ethics do on occasions blend. However there are other matters swimming below the surface here. Notwithstanding the mental health clearance given to the whistleblower, the psychiatrist still accepted a compulsory referral. The moment the "patient's" name goes into the appointment book is the moment collusion appears to start between the assessor and the department. This appearance of collusion and bias lays an extra layer of anxiety over the whistleblower's life. This additional exposure to stress can be an accidental artifact of the psychiatric referral system. Unfortunately we have evidence of management deliberately planning a psychiatric referral knowing it would induce stress in the whistleblower.

Further, even if the mental health clearance is unambiguously and consistently positive towards the whistleblower (that is, it would be very difficult for a malcontent reader to seize on certain words and phrases, to the whistleblowers' detriment), the referring department may still (and often does) reject the assessment and puts the whistleblower back on the psychiatric merry-go-round.¹⁵ Or, the department may give that "round" to the whistleblower and scheme up a replacement reprisal strategy (see p.25). After the abovementioned Sergeant of Police received her positive psychiatric assessment, the Commissioner of Police cancelled her first suspension order and signed a new suspension order.¹⁶ Obviously, the psychiatric tactic did not work for the Police administration. At the time of writing, replacement reprisal strategies are being put in place against the officer.

The whistleblower who does not willingly submit to behavioural assessment (misses appointments, refuses to go, when there is "unco-operative", etc) is exposed for different reasons. Negative attitudes in the whistleblower (e.g. anger, bitterness, depression - all products of the reprisal processes) can all too easily be interpreted in narrow psychiatric terms by assessors who have never experienced workplace vilification, or who would never consider blowing the whistle themselves.

Another dimension to the behavioural assessment strategy is that it is a form of victim blaming. The psychiatrist, in an unspoken pact with the client department, gives further credence to the proposition that there are no sick systems, only sick individuals. This way of looking at things undermines the whistleblowers' campaign which is based on first hand witnessing of systemic wrongdoing.

Finally, the assessment strategy plays for keeps in the sense that psychiatric labels are "super glued" onto the whistleblower. In time whistleblowers can actually have their whole identities changed in favour of the "diagnosis". So in summary, whistleblowers are exposed to an unethical alliance between entrepreneurial psychiatrists looking for new income opportunities and corrupt management systems looking for new victims to blame.

Only eight percent of total official reprisals constituted dismissal. It is clearly not easy to sack public sector employees with permanent status. However it is easy to threaten them with dismissal (or punitive transfer and legal action), and 18% of those who experienced official reprisals were so threatened. Our feeling is that these threats anticipate such dire consequences for the whistleblowers that they usually serve a very effective intimidatory role. Threats are often beyond the capacity of management to deliver. Management may threaten a whistleblower with dismissal, for example, when there are no grounds for such action. Often the whistleblower responds to the threat and backs off, scared to test management's capacity to deliver on the threat. It suits management's purpose to rein in the dissenter with threats rather than action which has to be procedurally correct and theoretically reviewable.

Whether reprisals take real shape, in the sense that they are actually carried out, or whether they remain lodged in the whistleblower's consciousness as dire possibilities, attacks on job security still constitutes one of the greatest of workplace stressors. In commenting on the fact that stress-related complaints are accounting for more and more of the compensation dollar, a spokesperson for Worksafe Australia recently said:

...the greatest concern of office workers is their future. Job security is one of the most potent stressors.¹⁷

It should also be noted that a covert intention behind threats of dismissal, legal action, etc, as well as behind the other reprisal mechanisms, is to make the whistleblowers' work situation so intolerable that the desired result of getting rid of the whistleblower is eventually effected through "voluntary" resignation. Angry, depressed, anxious; the embattled whistleblower finally allows the white flag to flutter above the "trench", from where he or she had resisted the might of the organisation for a short, sharp period of time.

Worst Considered Official Reprisals

Those members of the sample who experienced more than one official reprisal were asked to think about and nominate the worst official action taken against them, and to explain their choice.

Worst Official Reprisals	Number of Reprisals	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=48)
Dismissed	7	15
Internal investigation rejected complaint	7	15
Reprimanded	5	10
Retrenched (position made redundant)	4	8
Negative work reporting used or threatened	4	8
Punitively transferred	3	6
External investigation rejected complaint	3	6
Other Internal investigation confirmed complaint but unactioned/overtumed External Demoted Career advancement halted Threatened with punitive transfer, dismissal, charges, legal action Charged, sued Essential work resources withdrawn Position reclassified, whistleblower unsuccessful Kept in the dark Grievance lodged against whistleblower.	15	31

Discussion

The question on worst official reprisal only elicited a response rate of 47%. This is because only those respondents who experienced more than one reprisal could choose the worst amongst them. The fact that 29% of the total sample reported no official reprisals also kept the response rate down here. Even though the amount of data is small, there was quite a range of responses to this question. This reflects the range of reprisals metered out by management.

Being dismissed, naturally enough, was considered the worst official reprisal. This top position was shared by "official rejection of the complaint". Important consequences flow when management does not share the same view of the reported wrongdoing as the whistleblower. Without official recognition of the complaint the whistleblower is exposed to being regarded as a whinger, dobber or trouble-maker. Future work relationships are indelibly coloured by this failure to secure management support. Lack of management concurrence with the complaint also means an attack on the whistleblower's personal and professional integrity. Sometime this flows onto reduced self-esteem.



Worst Considered Official Reprisals: Reason Why Chosen

Reasons	No. of Reasons* (n=121)	Percent of Whistleblowers** (N=48)
Promotional opportunities lost	20	42
Personal and/or professional integrity questioned	19	40
Disillusioned with disclosure process	12	25
Financial position disrupted	10	21
Job lost	10	21
Family disrupted	7	15
Unable to clear name	7	15
Life generally disrupted	6	13
Work disrupted	5	10
Personal/professional esteem suffered	5	10
Emotional hardship suffered	3	6
Socially ostracised	2	4
Sense of being betrayed and persecuted	2	4
Disillusioned with job and/or career	1	2
Other	12	25

* These numbers represent the number of times reason chosen. Multiple answers permitted. Whistleblowers chose an average of 3 reasons.
 ** These percentages are based on the numbers of whistleblowers who experienced more than one official reprisal.

Discussion

We also received quite a diverse range of reasons why the affected sample chose the worst official reprisals that they did. Two reasons stand out; lost promotional opportunities, and personal and/or professional integrity questioned. Together they accounted for 32% of the total reasons given. The discussion of this matter will be held over until we have considered the next section on unofficial reprisals because the reasons given for choosing the worst reprisals, both official and unofficial are so similar.

Unofficial Reprisals

Response	Number of Whistleblowers	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=102)
Yes	96	94
No	6*	6
* 3 Whistleblowers left work before or immediately after disclosures made. 3 Whistleblowers said whistleblowing had no direct impact on career because of the peculiarities of their work situation.		

Discussion

While 71% of the sample said that they experienced official reprisals, 94% said that they suffered from what are referred to here as **unofficial reprisals**. When we consider that the 3 whistleblowers who left work before or immediately after they made their disclosures, probably would have experienced reprisals had they stayed, then the percentage of whistleblowers reporting unofficial reprisals rises to **97%!**

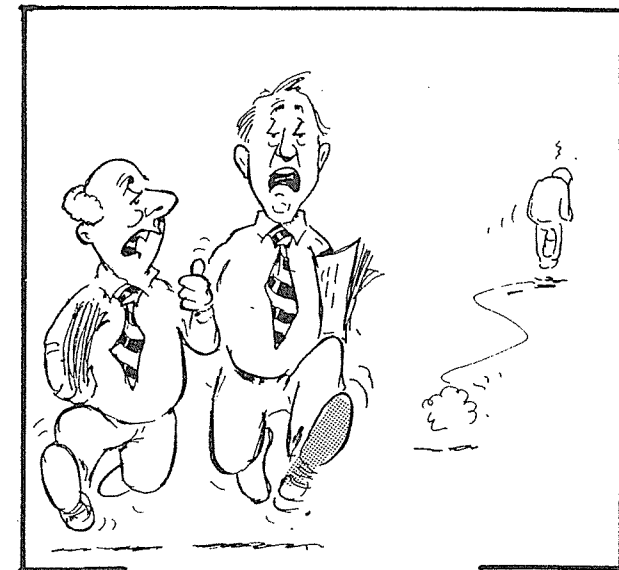
When we combined official and unofficial reprisal action, we found that the average rate for unofficial reprisals (4.2) is almost three times the official rate (1.5). **This means that the average whistleblowers experienced about 6 separate reprisal actions when they exposed public sector wrongdoing.**

Exposure to Reprisals (Average)			
	No. of Reprisals	No. of Sample	Average
Official	158	102	1.5
Unofficial	438	102	4.2

The higher exposure to unofficial reprisals is partly explained by the nature of the vindictive process. Official reprisals are procedurally hampered. They take time (for example arranging a punitive transfer, or longer still, a punitive redundancy) and standards of administrative justice have to appear to be met. Unofficial reprisals are not so hemmed in by procedural requirements. These reprisals often operate on a far more informal format and can occur spontaneously.

We think an important distinction needs to be made between 'vertical' unofficial reprisals, i.e. those orchestrated by a vindictive management (e.g. denied work necessary for promotion) or 'horizontal' unofficial reprisals, i.e. those manifested across work relationships (e.g. ostracism). The impact of the reprisal is increased when it appears on both horizontal and vertical levels. Ostracism can be used to illustrate this point. This popular form of reprisal can be effected by both management and colleagues of the whistleblowers. Twenty-three percent of the sample said that they were ostracised at work as a result of their whistleblowing. Workplace rumours about whistleblowing spread quickly. Sometimes driven by fear, other times by stereotyping, the wheels of marginalisation don't take too much energy to start spinning.

We tend to think that the difference between official and unofficial reprisals is the difference between a show trial which has all the trappings of legality, and a lynch mob which administers its own "justice". When whistleblowers face official reprisals they face actions which can be vindicated by reference to procedure. Unofficial reprisals in a sense are actions within the twilight zone of legality. The workplace takes the "law" into its own hands and extracts its own justice through abuses, suspicion, humiliation and sundry other actions.



Type of Unofficial Reprisals

Unofficial Reprisals	Number of Reprisals	Percent of Reprisals (n=438)*	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=96)
Socially ostracised at work	96	22	100
Motives questioned and attacked personally	69	16	72
Increased scrutiny of work	53	12	55
Abused by work colleagues	43	10	45
Denied work necessary for promotion	33	8	34
Physically isolated	30	7	31
Given very little work to do	27	6	28
Over-worked	20	5	21
Other Psychological harassment** (11) Stressed whistleblower forced into sick leave, early retirement, resignation (9) Public humiliation (7) Threatened (7) Labelled a troublemaker (5) Whistleblower's authority undermined at work (4) Deskilled (given low status work) (3) Blacklisted for other jobs (2) Abused by management (2) Lack of support by colleagues (2) Whistleblower's property damaged (2) Required to work in unsafe conditions (1) Forced to work with offender (1) Offered bribe to stay silent (1) Worker's confidentiality breached (1) Censored (1) Treated as less than human (1) Excluded from overtime (1) Denied access to workplace training (1) Grounded (kept in office) (1) Lost leave entitlements (1) Deprivation of liberty (1) Lack of support by management (1) Attempt by management to socially ostracise whistleblower (1)	67	15	70

* Multiple answers permitted.
 ** This response appears here because some of the whistleblowers specifically mentioned it in the "Other" section of the question on unofficial reprisals. If we had used "psychological harassment" as one of the set responses we suspect almost everybody would have ticked it.

Discussion

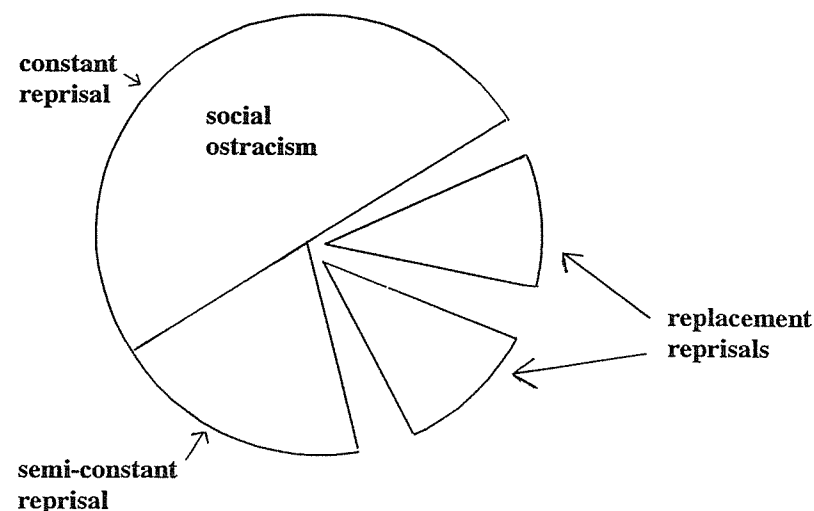
The study reported on 438 acts of alleged unofficial reprisals. The three most common forms of unofficial reprisals were:

social ostracism;
motives questioned and attacked personally;
increased scrutiny of work.

As we have noted previously whistleblowers in the sample were exposed to an average of 4.2 unofficial reprisals. It makes sense to think of reprisal clusters comprised of one constant reprisal (social ostracism), one almost everpresent reprisal (motives questioned and attacked personally) and two "try-on" reprisals.

By this we mean that all whistleblowers in the sample experienced social ostracism. This is the constant reprisal. Running alongside this for most of the whistleblowers (72%) was the reprisal of discrediting the messenger. This is what we call the semi-constant reprisal. In combination with these two, are two other reprisals that we refer to as "try-ons" because the sample reported that this is exactly what management does. A reprisal is "tried-on" for a period of time, and if not working in terms of the goal of punishment and forcing the whistleblower to resign (e.g. worker's confidentiality breached) another reprisal is "tried-on" (e.g. required to work in unsafe conditions).

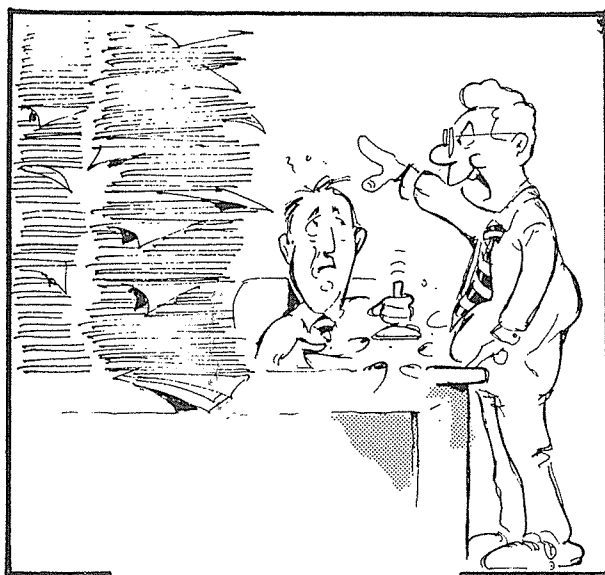
Reprisal Combination



Sometimes there appears to be no logic in the rhythm of the reprisals. For example 21% of the sample experienced the reprisal of overwork¹⁸ and 28% were under-worked. In quite a few cases these opposing strategies were "tried on" the same whistleblower. For example in case 241 the whistleblower ricocheted from being given only photocopying to do, to being given a job classified far above her current training and abilities.

We should note that the unpredictability of these attacks, together with the fact that different reprisal strategies have different effects on the same whistleblower, keeps the employee of conscience in a very toxic work environment.

Fifteen percent of the unofficial reprisals constituted other actions. We thought that all these rated a special mention, so they have all been listed, using as closely as possible, the words selected by the whistleblowers.



Worst Considered Unofficial Reprisal

Those members of the sample who experienced more than one unofficial reprisal were asked to think about and nominate the worst unofficial action taken against them, and to explain their choice.

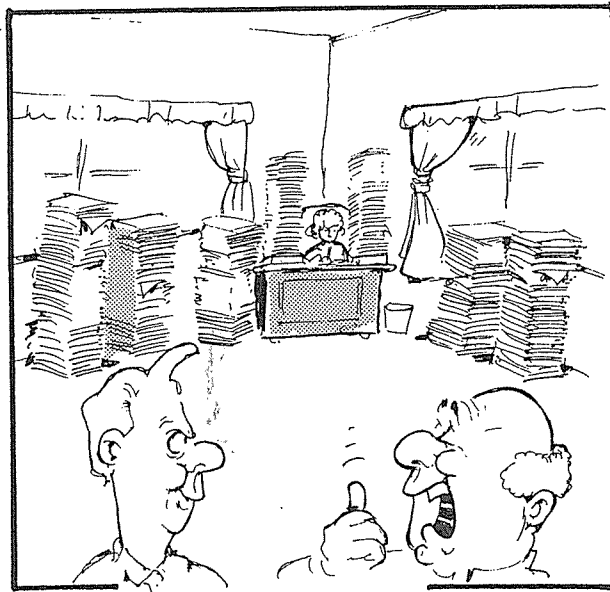
Worst Unofficial Reprisals	Number of Reprisals	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=81)
Motives questioned and attacked personally	28	35
Physically isolated	17	21
Socially ostracised at work	5	6
Increased scrutiny at work	5	6
Given very little work to do	3	4
Denied work necessary for promotion	3	4
Abused by work colleagues	2	2
Overworked	2	2
Other Psychological harassment Labelled a troublemaker Public humiliation Blacklisted for other jobs Workplace becomes so stressful whistleblower forced to go on sick leave Lack of support by colleagues Abused by management Denied access to workplace training Threatened	16	20

Discussion

Two of the most common unofficial reprisals (socially ostracised; and motives questioned, and attacked personally) were also rated amongst the worst reprisals to have happened to the sample. Interestingly, the most common unofficial reprisal (social ostracism), which was experienced by all, was only referred to as the worst by 6% of those whistleblowers who had multiple unofficial reprisals to choose from. The top place went to the strategy of questioning the whistleblower's motives and attacking her or him personally (35%). Because of the sort of people we believe whistleblowers are (elaborated on p.31 and in

Part D) we know they are particularly hurt by any questioning of their honesty and integrity.

Being physically isolated was regarded by 21% of the sample as being the worst unofficial reprisal they had to face. The physical isolation strategy is different from the strategy of ostracism. In the former, management takes whistleblowers away from their accustomed work settings and gets them to work out of broom cupboards, so to speak. In the latter strategy the group emotionally leaves the whistleblower. While the ultimate purpose of physical isolation and estrangement from work colleagues is the same, the dynamics and effects are different. We suspect that physical isolation is considered a worst reprisal than ostracism because it directly attacks the worker's sense of achievement, job satisfaction, and desire to do interesting work. We elaborate this further in Part D.



Worst Considered Unofficial Reprisals: Reason Why Chosen

Reasons	Number of Reasons (n=109)*	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=81)
Blacklisted for other jobs	32	40
Personal and/or professional integrity questioned	19	23
Emotional hardship	14	17
Lost career and promotional opportunities	8	10
Personal and/or professional esteem suffered	8	10
Unable to clear name	7	9
Sense of betrayal	4	5
Social ostracism	3	4
Disillusioned with job/career	2	2
Disillusioned with disclosure process	2	2
Disruption to family	1	1
Disruption to work	1	1
Lost job	1	1
Other	7	9

* Multiple answers permitted.

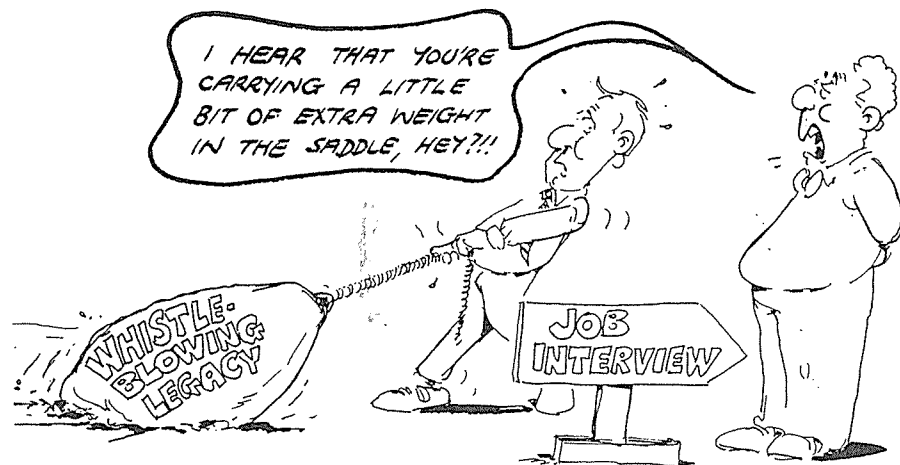
Discussion

Being blacklisted for other jobs was easily the most common reason chosen to justify the worst unofficial reprisals (40%). Blacklisting does not appear in the companion data for official reprisals because it cannot occur officially, being clearly an illegal act. The un-noted phone call to a previous employer from a prospective employer can take place easily. The content of these contacts in which damaging and defamatory material is brought up to scare the potential employer away remains private, and even if discovered, can be readily denied.

Recently a building inspector in Brisbane, unable to get work in his home city since making a public interest disclosure against a local council, travelled 7,000 km through New South Wales and Victoria looking for re-employment. He

impressed one employer who offered him a job. However on return to Brisbane, a letter awaited him withdrawing the offer. Obviously a phone call was made to the previous employer. Not only is blacklisting a sinister strategy, it is also intimidatingly enduring and transmissible from one workplace to the next.

We tried to understand why blacklisting was feared most since most whistleblowers were employed at the time of interview. We have previously noted that only 18% of the sample were out of work at interview time.¹⁹ The reason is that these people recognise that blacklisting blocks their escape routes out of their workplaces rendered toxic when they blew the whistle. Blacklisted workers simply don't get re-employed. The fear of long-term unemployment as the result of an effective smear campaign is a nightmare to these people who are solidly into the work ethos. They need, in other words, a rewarding career to define themselves. The fear is also there because they usually have high standards of living (and indebtedness) which can only be sustained with constant income.



Combination of Reasons for Choosing Worst Reprisals

We combined the reasons for choosing the worst of the official and unofficial reprisals after we discovered their uncanny similarity in spite of the very different nature of the two types of reprisals.

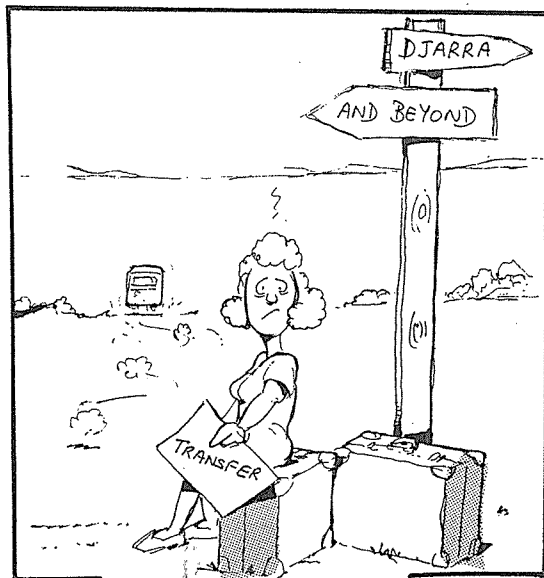
Reasons	No of Reasons (n = 230)*
<u>Damage to career</u>	
Blacklisted for other jobs	32
Lost promotional opportunities	28
Lost job	11
Disruption to job/work	6
Disillusionment with job/career	3
Sub Total	80
<u>Damage to personal honour</u>	
Personal/professional integrity questioned	38
Unable to clear name	14
Personal/professional esteem suffered	13
Sense of betrayal	6
Sub Total	71
Disruption to life/family/finances	24
Emotional hardship	17
Disillusionment with disclosure process	14
Other	19
* Combined total of reasons	

Discussion

The majority of reasons clustered around damage to career and personal honour. For people whose sense of self-identify is crucially linked with their occupation, any attack on their status in the workforce is regarded as an attack on them personally, and not just as a setback to their earning capacity. Case 196 said to us "I lost the job I loved and my self esteem never recovered".

Just as damaging to them is any attack on their sense of personal honour. Honesty and integrity (living out their espoused values) are of utmost importance to whistleblowers. They tell us that they live by a strict moral code of ethics which very clearly distinguishes right from wrong, and that if they did

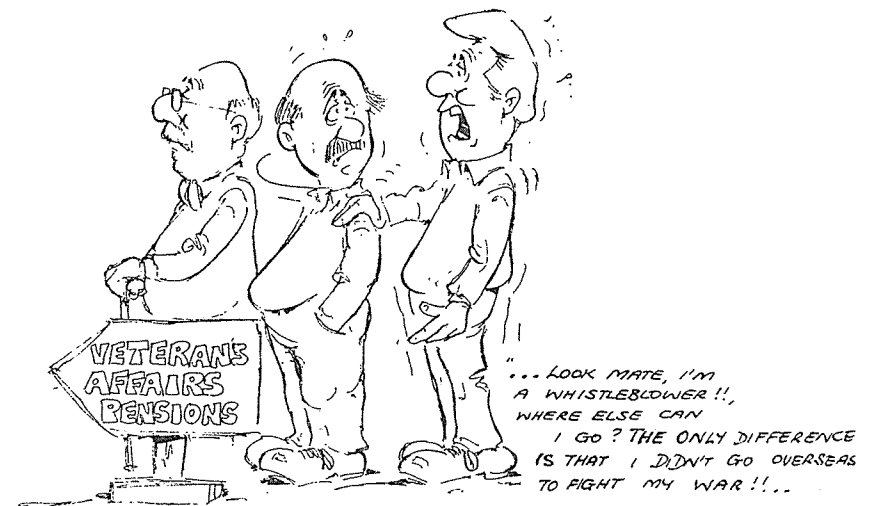
Having their name and reputation wrongfully damaged is also intolerable for these people since honesty and right living is such a basic component of their innermost nature. The desire to clear their name is one of the powerful forces driving them to continue their struggle for justice against such terrible odds. They frequently tell us (as case 247 did for example) that until their credibility is redeemed they cannot start to recover.



Before leaving the reprisal section we present selected data from other studies. It is important to note that we are not making any claims to comparability of results. Clearly the studies mentioned differ on very important matters: different industrial conditions, different samples, and crucial variations in definitions of key concepts. Having said that, the results do send a slight message that it does make sense to talk about a profile of reprisals that transcends national borders.

[illegible]

FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF WHISTLEBLOWING



FINANCIAL EFFECTS OF WHISTLEBLOWING

For a period after I was suspended without pay I was ineligible for the dole. We had no income. We only survived because our family pitched in and helped us. [153]

Without my income we couldn't survive and we had to declare bankruptcy. Legal Aid was insufficient so I had to fight my case through the courts on my own. [268]

In this part we examine the financial effects of whistleblowing. In Part A we suggested that the reprisals were designed to hurt the whistleblower, either in an open or clandestine fashion. From the analysis we can conclude that these reprisals are very effective: whistleblowers do indeed suffer. This suffering extends to their financial situation.

To develop the financial data base we asked the sample to account for their annual income (all sources) across a time frame that started in the year before PID, and finished two years after the PID.

Whistleblowers' Annual Income

\$	Year 1 (Year Before PID) (N=75)	Year 2 (Year of PID) (N=72)	Year 3 (Year After PID) (N=58)	Year 4 (2nd Year After PID) (N=35)
Nil		1	7	4
1-10000	3	8	8	7
10001-20000	12	10	8	6
20001-30000	17	18	12	7
30001-40000	21	16	15	7
40001-50000	16	16	8	4
50001-60000	2	1		
60001-70000	2	2		
70001-80000	1			
80001+	1			

Discussion

This table allows us to monitor the whistleblower's annual income around the time of disclosure. Year 2 (in bold) is income in the year of disclosure. It is important to note that we do not have a complete income profile as 26% of the sample chose not to give any information here. It is also important to note that as we proceed through the years the data thins out. This is because the relevant time frame was 1990-93. Only a small number in the sample who disclosed prior to this period would have got beyond year 4 in the table above.

Notwithstanding the declining sample, a pattern of financial loss is clear. In the year before PID 6 people were in the \$50001+ bracket. In the year after PID our data shows nil entries in this bracket. Similarly 16 whistleblowers were in the \$40001-\$50000 bracket prior to their PIDs. They were still there in the year of whistleblowing but our data shows only 8 remaining the following year, and only 4 the year after that.

It is difficult to make any definitive statement about the effects of whistleblowing on income from the data in this table because of the high percent who chose not to provide this information and because of the short time frame for the whistleblowing experience of our sample. However the next Table, which includes data from the whole sample shows a clearer picture.

Impact of Disclosure on Income

Response	Number of Responses	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=102)
Income remained same	43	42
Income increased	9	9
Income decreased	50	49

Discussion

Forty-two percent of the sample reported that their whistleblowing had no impact on their income. This reflects the permanent nature of public sector employment. The 9% who reported income increase through the disclosure

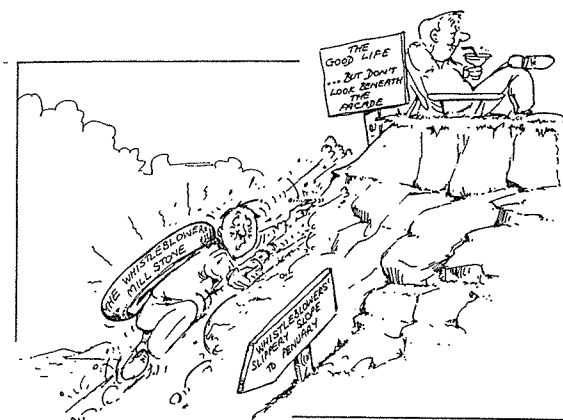
period are only talking about normal salary increments. The interesting statistic is the 49% of whistleblowers who reported a decrease in income. The causes of this decrease are discussed on p.40. The decreased income figures are almost 3 times higher than that reported in the American study by the Soekens.²⁰ The Soeken study was carried out in late 1986 with a sample of 87 whistleblowers.

Whistleblowers' Lost Income

Year	Average Income (Annual)
Year before whistleblowing	\$34,526
Year of whistleblowing	\$30,273
Year after whistleblowing	\$25,370
Year II after whistleblowing	\$23,442

Discussion

We used the abovementioned annual income data to arrive at an average annual income. The total of each individual income for each annual period was divided by the number of whistleblowers who provided data for that period. The average loss over the 4 year period was over 30%.



Reasons for Whistleblowers' Deteriorated Financial Situations

Reasons	Number of Reasons*	Percent of Whistleblowers (n=50)
Unemployed for a period (including suspension without pay)	28	56
Property division through separation or divorce	4	8
High legal costs associated with whistleblowers defence	9	18
Different costs to meet	12	24
Other	29	58
No longer getting overtime, penalty rates, higher duty rates (5)		
Only had casual work since whistleblowing (3)		
Pay decrease on demotion (3)		
Took unpaid sick leave (3)		
Relocation expenses (3)		
Additional living expenses to boost self-esteem (2)		
No longer getting contract work from department (1)		
High costs in preparing case against department (1)		
Denied annual increments (1)		
Additional health costs (1)		
Additional living expenses (rent) (1)		
Additional tax due to delayed salary payment (1)		
Denied redundancy payout (1)		
Resigned and took lower-paying employment (1)		
Child care costs due to separation (1)		
Legal costs due to child custody battle (1)		

* Multiple answers permitted.

Discussion

This table sets out the reasons why the finances of 50 of the sample were adversely affected as a result of making disclosures. The most powerful reason was unemployment, including suspension without pay since 56% of whistleblowers so affected gave this as the reason. Other punitive measures used by employees which directly affected income were demotion, withdrawal of penalty or overtime rates, non-renewal of contracts, and denial of annual increments. Most of the other reasons involved whistleblowing-driven out-of-pocket expenses, or the indirect financial effects of repercussions on personal or family well-being.

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL EFFECTS



PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

Suicide seemed like such a reasonable rational choice at the time [of the reprisals] [203]

I started to feel mad, paranoid, in total despair. I began to doubt myself; to believe that there was something wrong with me [173]

In this part we try to unpack the relationship between whistleblowing and well-being. Our study, statistically unsophisticated as it is, appears to be the first large scale attempt to articulate the relationship between whistleblowing and well-being in the public sector.²¹ While our data and the ensuing interpretations focus on unhealthy and emotionally troubled whistleblowers, it is vitally important to acknowledge that because these states of unhealthiness were produced in organisational cultures, we are really talking about unhealthy workplaces.²² In a brilliant book entitled **The Neurotic Organisation**,²³ De Vries and Miller, deftly apply the psychoanalytical metaphor to organisations:

The Paranoid Organisation: Managerial suspicions translate into a primary emphasis on organisational intelligence and controls. The environment is studied to identify threats and challenges.

The Compulsive Organisation: The compulsive organisation is wedded to ritual. Every last detail of operation is planned out in advance and carried on in a routinised and pre-programmed fashion. Thoroughness, competences, and conformity to standard and established procedures are emphasised.

The Dramatic Organisation: Dramatic organisations are hyperactive and impulsive. Their decision makers live in a world of hunches and impressions rather than facts.

The Depressive Organisation: The depressive organisation is characterised by inactivity, lack of confidence, and extreme conservatism, and bureaucratically motivated insularity. There is an atmosphere of extreme passivity and purposelessness.

The Schizoid Organisation: The schizoid organisation is characterised by a leadership vacuum with its top executives discouraging interaction for fear of involvement. Sometimes the second tier of management makes up for what is missing with their over warmth and extroversion.

We think De Vries and Miller have given us more than a new set of metaphors. We think they have helped to refocus attention from unhealthy workers to unhealthy organisations. Its a focus we retain throughout this Part. We have presented the data on the authoritarian organisational structure of the Queensland public sector in the previous report, and will not pursue that line of inquiry any further here.²⁴

The sample was asked to consider the impact (if any) of their whistleblowing on their personal well-being. This concept of well-being was construed to take in emotional as well as physical features. The results are laid out in the tables below. We gave whistleblowers the option of reporting positive and negative effects on their personal well-being. Some whistleblowers answered paradoxically in the sense that they nominated both positive and negative effects. When they elaborated on these seemingly contradictory responses, the time frame appeared as the crucial variable. Positive responses were often answered in the present tense (at least at the time of interview) and the negative effects had often been suffered for a previous period of time during the worst phase of the whistleblowing experience.

Our results are reported here under the following headings:

Impact of Whistleblowing on Personal Well-Being
Whistleblowing and Psychological Strength
Whistleblowing and Physical Health
Emotional Effects of Whistleblowing



Impact of Whistleblowing on Personal Well-being

Impact	Number of Impacts	Percent of Impacts (n=212)*	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=102)
Nil impact	5	2	5
Physical health improved	9	4	8
Became psychologically stronger	45	21	44
Physical health deteriorated	72	34	71
Emotional well-being deteriorated	81	38	79

* Multiple answers permitted.

Discussion

Two hundred and twelve self-rated impacts were obtained from 102 whistleblowers. The high number of impacts tell us not only that whistleblowing is usually a salient personal experience, it also confirms the phenomenon of multiple repercussions that we previously isolated (see p.25). The most frequent combination of impacts was a blend of physical and emotional deterioration, which was experienced by two thirds of the sample. Given the interdependence between emotional and physical states, this blend was to be expected. It would be most unusual for the work stress to impact on a whistleblower's physical health and leave his/her emotional condition unaltered, and vice versa.

Only five whistleblowers recorded nil impact. To check the correlation between reprisals and adverse health effects, we looked at the five whistleblowers who reported no health effect and the four who suffered from no form of reprisal, either official or unofficial. Only one [170] fell into both categories, and that person was already out of the department when he made his PID.

Another one [234] was transferred away from the immediate PID worksite, and so was presumably protected from unofficial reprisals (he listed none). Also, this whistleblower reported that his PID had made a positive difference to departmental operations - in other words, his disclosure had been acted upon and remedies effected.

Another two did suffer reprisals, but the critical factor here also may be that they felt their PID had had a positive impact. Further research will be necessary to determine if this validation of whistleblowers' assessment of departmental wrongdoing and acceptance of their subsequent actions played an important role in the absence of any adverse health effects. Only one of the five [189] suffered reprisals **and** felt that his PID made *no* difference to departmental functioning **and** reported *no* health effects. It would be interesting to research further the coping mechanisms of this unusual whistleblower.

Of the four who suffered no form of reprisal at all, one reported no health effect [170], and two said the only effect was that they had become psychologically stronger [208, 232]. Interestingly, both of those said their PID had a positive impact on their department. Only one [207] reported adverse health effects while experiencing *no* reprisals, but not only did this whistleblower suspect that there would be reprisals following her PID, so she voluntarily exited from the workplace immediately after blowing the whistle (and has remained unemployed since), but perhaps more importantly, she reported that her PID had made *no* difference to her department's mal-functioning.

This comparison of those few whistleblowers who reported no health effect and those who suffered no reprisals seems to indicate that rather than the expected correlation between these two factors, what we have more probably uncovered is a correlation between the assessment of a positive impact on the department from the PID (i.e. it had the desired effect), and the absence of adverse health effects. At the very least, we can perhaps presume that the validation of the whistleblowers' actions can mitigate adverse health effects, even if reprisals do occur. Further research will be needed to verify this possibility, as other variables such as personal stress-coping mechanisms may also be active here.

Only 9 whistleblowers reported improved physical health. Six of these reported better health the moment they left the workplace while the other 3 still in the workplace made a deliberate effort to change their lifestyle in order to cope with the additional stress.

Given our understanding of the overseas research on the effects of whistleblowing, we were surprised to find that 44% of the sample reported that through the whistleblowing experience they had become psychologically stronger. A lot seems to depend on the time frame. The whistleblower had to be somewhat removed and/or recovered from the experience to be able to see

that they had gained personal strengths during the course of their struggle. Many who were still in the whistleblowing process said they believed they would be able to recognise these improvements subsequently. The short time frame of the study (1990-1993), and the slow torturous nature of reprisals, meant that many in the sample were still in hostile workplaces and still suffering.

A much higher percentage of whistleblowers (71%) reported deteriorations in their physical health. When we considered the type of physical complaints reported we concluded that they were predominantly stress triggered. An even greater percentage (79%) indicated some form of deterioration to their emotional well-being.

While one would logically expect these complaints to abate when work stress finished, we are not in a position to make such a conclusion for a number of reasons. First our study was designed as a contemporaneous investigation, not an historical survey in which we could track the clinical and life history records of whistleblowers over a long period of time.²⁵ Because we did not have this clinical and life history data, it would be dangerous to attribute all the reported complaints to whistleblowing-caused work stress *per se*. There are many other factors involved, such as:

- the personality of the whistleblowers,
- the presence of (non-work) sources of stress,
- the existence of a support network,
- the ability of the whistleblower to utilise such a network,
- individual coping mechanisms for meeting life crises,
- individual modes of reacting to stress, and
- pre-whistleblowing health status.²⁶

Having made the point that we cannot attribute all the reported complaints to whistleblowing it is important to note that the whistleblowers themselves apportion these symptoms to their whistleblowing experience. They also told us that relieving their whistleblowing story through participating in the study caused a recurrence of these symptoms. For example, case 275 said that he experienced all his emotional symptoms again when he was filling out the questionnaire. A detailed presentation of the data for physical and emotional effects follows.

Whistleblowing and Psychological Strength

Even though our sample reported horrific experiences, 44% of them were still prepared to claim that through these experiences, they gained greater psychological strength.

Effects	Number of Effects	Percent of Effects (n=98)*	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=45)*
Became more self-confident and assertive**	36	37	80
Became less naive about issues***	16	16	36
Reaffirmed or re-defined personal values	11	11	24
Learned to view crises as opportunities for personal development	7	7	16
Became more accepting of myself	7	7	16
Able to see whistleblowing in non-personal terms	6	6	13
Developed new coping and survival techniques, lost sense of isolation	5	5	11
<u>Other</u> Become more determined to fight injustice (3) Learnt to think before acting (2) Awareness of close family ties strengthened (2) Increased understanding of myself (1) Listened to, not diminished (1) More relaxed and accepting of workplace conflict (1)	10	10	22
* Multiple answers permitted. ** Includes responses from the whistleblowers who said that they found new strength and determination to handle stressful situations (13); developed more confidence in acting on their own assessments of work situations (3); more positive about themselves and optimistic that they can make a difference in the future (1); and became less dependent on others' views and assessments (1). *** Includes responses from those whistleblowers who said that they became more perceptive about workplace issues (3). + Number of whistleblowers who said that they had become psychologically stronger.			

Discussion

Eighty percent of these whistleblowers who reported psychological improvements referred to increased self-confidence and assertiveness. Why was this? We suspect that the answer lies in the solitary circumstances of their disclosures. Alone they discovered wrongdoing, alone they reported it, and

alone they suffered the consequences. They had to learn (sometimes very quickly) to depend on themselves, and develop survival strategies (e.g. assertiveness). This led to a heightened self confidence. Another interesting result is that almost a quarter of those reporting improved psychological well-being referred to the positive impact the disclosure experience had on their personal values. Old values were "tested" during the experience and re-affirmed, or new values were embraced. We consider the issue of values in greater detail in Part D.

Whistleblowing and Physical Health

This section reports on 205 health complaints suffered by 72 members of the sample.

Complaints	Number of Complaints*	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=72)**
<u>Immune System</u>		
Colds, flu, virus	4	6
Other infections	2	3
Dengue fever	1	1
<u>Cardio-vascular System</u>		
Palpitations	4	6
Increased blood pressure	4	6
Heart attack	1	1
Chest pains	1	1
Other blood vessel symptoms	1	1
<u>Respiratory System</u>		
Respiratory problems	7	10
Hyperventilation	1	1
<u>Gastro-intestinal Digestive System</u>		
Digestive disorders	13	18
Weight gain	9	13
Eating disorders	8	11
Ulcers	4	6
Weight loss	3	4

Complaints	Number of Complaints*	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=72)**
<u>Reproductive System</u>		
Decline in sex drive	3	4
Menstrual irregularity	2	3
Ectopic pregnancy	1	1
Miscarriage	1	1
Other reproductive problems	1	1
<u>Skin Conditions</u>		
Skin disorders	6	8
Sweats/flushes	2	3
<u>Muscular-skeletal System</u>		
Other muscular-skeletal problems	10	14
Back problems	3	4
Muscle strain	2	3
<u>Headaches</u>		
Other headaches	12	17
Migraine	5	7
<u>Nervous System</u>		
Insomnia	36	50
Lethargy, exhaustion	16	22
Other nervous conditions	12	17
Increased smoking	9	13
Nervous twitches, shakes	5	7
Alcohol overuse	4	6
Rashes	3	4
Paraesthesia	2	3
Speech difficulties	1	1
Prescribed drug overuse	1	1
<u>Other Physical Conditions</u>	5	7
* Multiple answers permitted.		
** Number of whistleblowers who reported deterioration in health.		

Discussion

These statistics demonstrate the grim profile of physical health deterioration that was either caused or significantly contributed to by the whistleblowing experiences. It is important to inform the reader about how this profile was generated. The sample was asked if physical health deterioration occurred as a result of the whistleblowing. Those who said that health deterioration occurred

(72) went forward to a following question in the schedule where they elaborate specifically on their health breakdowns. These elaborations were then categorised and counted. What was reported was a subjectively felt range of symptoms. While the use of self-reports in the work stress area has support in the literature because of the emphasis this approach gives to the role of perception of stress,²⁷ we believe the study results would have been stronger here if we could have tested the construct validity of these self reports with related objective data (sick leave records, compensation claims, medical records and prescription records).²⁸

Insomnia was clearly the most common physical consequence of whistleblowing, with half the effected sample experiencing sleeplessness, disturbed sleep or prolonged inability to sleep. Insomnia of course is one of the royal symptoms of stress. Unable to turn their thinking processes off, unable to stop their imagination conjuring dreadful scenarios, and unable to escape anxiety, night takes over from day as the stressed-out whistleblower is exposed to a recurring 24 hour cycle of sleeplessness. The effect on work and relationships of the fatigue and irritability that accompanies insomnia is obvious. It is little wonder that lethargy and exhaustion were the second most common symptoms reported.

Digestive disorders (18%), muscular-skeletal problems (14%), overeating (13%), eating disorders (11%) and respiratory problems (10%) were the most common experienced symptoms after lethargy and exhaustion. It should be noted that the reduction of sex drive data here seriously misrepresents the true picture. When we considered the impacts of whistleblowing on intimate relationships, a significant majority reported reduced or absent sex drive. We report the results of this in Result Release Four.

The high health deterioration (71%) reported by the sample is not that much different from the results reported in Soeken's study of America whistleblowers (80%).²⁹

We have presented in the following table the comparative rates of health breakdown between our study and that undertaken by the Soekens. Only those symptoms common to both studies are included here. Note that sample sizes are slightly different. We initially thought that the fact that the Soekens were able to report higher percentages suffering these serious complaints was attributed to the fact that their sample comprised people in therapy for Donald Soeken is a psychiatrist. However this was not the case. We are at a loss to

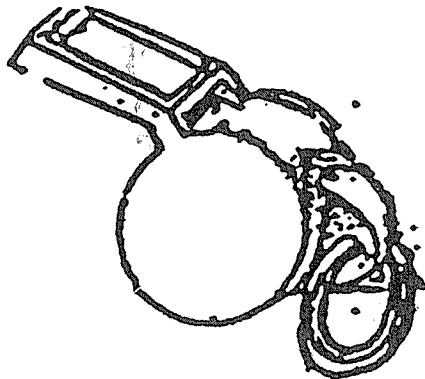
explain why the American sample suffered the abovementioned complaints more severely.

	QWS (N=72)	Soeken (N=84)
	%	%
Increased alcohol use	6	27
Drug overuse*	1	18
Increased smoking	13	24
Weight loss	4	30
Weight increase	13	37
Insomnia	50	77

* In QWS this means overuse of prescription drugs. It is not known whether the Soeken result includes use of illegal drugs.

Emotional Effects of Whistleblowing

Nearly 80% of the total sample claim to have experienced some form of emotional deterioration as a direct result of whistleblowing. We separated and itemised these psychological complaints and found 81 people suffered a total of 287 different symptoms, i.e. an average of 3.5 each. As we discovered with the physical symptoms, the psychological complaints suffered by the majority here are indicative of severe stress syndrome.



Effects	Number of Effects*	Percent of Effects (n=287)	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=81)**
Irritable, highly strung, anxious, scared, loss of emotional control, can't relax, manic	45	16	56
Angry, frustrated, bitter, vendetta fantasies	29	10	36
Depression, listlessness, thoughts of suicide, attempted suicide	27	9	33
Loss of self-esteem/confidence, self-doubts, shame	26	9	32
Emotional and physical withdrawal (either doing or suffering from), feeling hurt because not believed	26	9	32
Feeling stressed, not coping, wanting to flee situation	23	8	28
Mood swings, short-tempered, cry easily	21	7	26
Disillusioned, negative, cynical	17	6	21
Distrustful of people, suspicious	12	4	15
Found it difficult to function in work setting (memory loss, reduced attention span)	11	4	14
Loss respect for workplace, reduced work commitment/satisfaction, feeling hurt at way being treated	11	4	14
Felt powerless, helpless, loss of confidence, out of control	9	3	11
Other Interpersonal/family conflicts (7) Constantly reliving whistleblower experience (6) Felt intimidated (4) Uncertain about future (4) Experienced grief reaction (3) Felt guilty (3) Unhealthy changes eating/drinking (2) Became financially irresponsible (1)	30	10	37

* Multiple answers permitted.
** Number of whistleblowers who reported emotional problems.

Discussion

Other symptoms suffered by nearly 30% of the 81 include those associated with extreme depression, frustration, self-doubt, withdrawal from others and a feeling of not coping with the situation. When combined with the other emotional complaints listed, most often given in the whistleblowers' own words, we realise that we are looking at an overall picture of inward-focussed, self-destructive emotional behaviours rather than the acting out of the rage, anger and frustration on either the source of the wrongdoing or on those systems which create and condone it. Even the thoughts of personally punishing the wrongdoers remain internalised as vendetta fantasies.

The full force of the emotional damage caused by the reprisal scenario was driven home to us in the most dramatic case when one of our whistleblowers who impressed us as a reasonable person and responsible parent, and who had previously experienced state violence in a totalitarian country, said that the horror of her whistleblowing experience was so great that she had contemplated killing her two children and then taking her own life.

The high levels of negative impact on emotional states reported here matches the overseas results. The Soeken study reveals that 86% of whistleblowers in their sample reported emotional deterioration.³⁰ Again we compare the comparative rates of emotional breakdown between our study and that undertaken by the Soekens. The warnings given previously (p.51) apply.

	QWS (N=81) %	Soeken (N=84) %
Increased anger*	36	80
Sense of powerlessness	11	82
Increased anxiety**	56	81
Attempted suicide*	33	10
Feeling of withdrawal**	32	46
* In QWS study, "... frustrated, bitter, vendetta fantasies," included. ** In QWS study, "irritable highly strung ... scared, loss of emotional control, can't relax, manic," included. + In QWS study "depression, listlessness, thoughts of suicide", included. ++ In QWS study, "... feeling hurt because not believed", included.		

The Whistleblower Stress Syndrome

The literature on the impact of work stress on physical health and psychological well-being is voluminous.³¹ However, the evidence linking work stress to major chronic disease and permanent, if not long-standing emotional deterioration is relatively scant and inconclusive.³² It has been suggested that our thinking about work stress is contaminated by the way we divide the phenomenon into acute and chronic stress.³³ Stressful work events (e.g. reprimands, punitive transfers and ostracism) are not always immediate, for example sometimes there is a lead time of weeks, months, or even years in which the worker is anticipating a reprimand or expecting something "bad" to happen to them. So it probably makes more sense to consider stress as a drawn-out issue like a nagging toothache rather than a slap in the face.

This reasoning ought not to hide the fact that the long-term effects of whistleblowing on stressed-workers' health and emotional well-being remains a puzzle.³⁴ We emphasise, as we did previously, that if the determinants of work stress are deemed to reside in the individual, then the toxicity of the workplace and its central role in the development of stress will be overlooked; a scenario that does nothing for organisational reform.³⁵

We think that it is important to reiterate that the physical and psychological conditions reported in this Part constituted important bio-psychological changes in the whistleblowers' lives; changes that we assert were direct outcomes of the whistleblowing experience. We hope we are not presenting a simple argument about causality here. We have acknowledged that a wide variety of factors contribute to the manifestation of physical symptoms and behavioural changes, including behavioural and genetic predisposition to developing emotional and physical conditions. As we noted in our discussion of physical health deterioration we did not take predisposition into account. This is because it was outside the terms of reference of the study. We acknowledge that more research is needed to clarify the exact contribution whistleblowing makes to physical and emotional breakdown. Having said that, we were sure that the whistleblowing experience produced or accelerated behavioural and physical changes that would not have been so produced or accelerated had not the whistleblower been through a process of disclosure and subsequent suffering.

Before leaving Part C, a final note needs to be made about the nature of the stress that we discovered within the whistleblowing experience. It may well be that with further research a specific "whistleblower-stress syndrome" can be fully articulated.

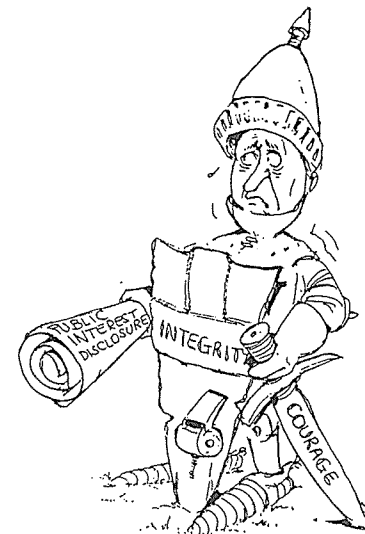
We think the early signs of this unique stress syndrome are already present within our research data, and comprise the following factors:

- * Reprisals produce an extensive range of bio-psychological complaints.
- * Bio-psychological complaints however are not dependent on the existence of reprisals. They are also triggered when whistleblowers realise that their disclosures have been invalidated and/or the workplace has failed to render up "justice".
- * The cessation of these complaints is not dependent upon the whistleblowers' removal from the toxic workplace.
- * The range and intensity of complaints is mitigated if the whistleblowers are re-employed to their complete satisfaction.
- * Relivability, whereby the unsatisfied whistleblower returns in his/her mind constantly to the disclosure experience, and in so doing maintains the complaints.

It appears that the syndrome can only be negated through a satisfactory achievement of the following objectives:

- * disclosures are validated;
- * wrongdoing is investigated;
- * wrongdoers are brought to account and wrongdoing patterns arrested;
- * whistleblower's name is cleared;
- * adequate compensation for related expenses and suffering is paid;
- * whistleblower's career is put back on track.

WORK VALUE PROFILE AND WORK VALUE CHANGES



WORK VALUE PROFILE AND WORK VALUE CHANGES

I live by principles instilled in me since childhood. [157]

I've come to distrust anyone in authority. [269]

We were very interested in the work value profile of the whistleblower. Specifically we wanted to know:

- * what type of person makes public interest disclosures;
- * whether the disclosure experience impacts on whistleblowers' work values;
- * whether this impact is of a short or long-term duration.

To this end we designed a before-after format whereby respondents were asked to rank on a 6 point scale how strongly they held 21 nominated work values prior to, and after the whistleblowing experience.

The instruction to interviewers for the work value question read: "*Remind respondents that in answering these questions, they are to be mindful of certain work situations, but not to be overly influenced by them.*" This instruction was inserted in an attempt to avoid responses being determined by specific work realities. We did not do any validity checks on the work value answers by conducting post survey interviews with a small sub-sample, therefore we cannot be completely satisfied that respondents did manage to detach their answers from their whistleblowing work situations when distributing nominated values across the 6 point preference scale.

All members of the sample (102) answered this work value question, but 8 whistleblowers did not respond to the "after" segment because they felt that they were not sufficiently advanced into their whistleblowing experience to be able to give an indication of the shifts in their work values after their PIDs. To accommodate this we are using 2 sample sizes here. We use the full sample size when we consider the "before" data and a sample size of 94 when we consider value shifts.

We were mindful of the problem of differential interpretations of these values. We attempted to narrow the interpretative range with two strategies. First the work values were presented using abbreviated phrases; second the interviewer provided short standard definitions of the work values (see next page).

Work Values	Standard Definitions
Achievement in work	Getting a sense of personal achievement from your work.
Advancement (promotion)	Career development through promotion.
Benefits (sick leave, holiday pay, etc)	Importance of work benefit component of workplace participation.
Proud (to work for department)	Working for department is a matter of pride.
Contribution (to society)	Believing that the work you do makes a contribution to society.
Convenient work hours	Time required in workplace is convenient.
Co-workers (pleasant and capable)	Working alongside people who are pleasant and capable.
Independence in work	Working independently without constant supervision.
Influence in work	Having a sense that you can influence work situations and other workers.
Interesting job	The job is of continual interest to you.
Job security (permanency)	Employment security.
Job status	Feeling that your work carries a valued status in society.
Meaningful work	Feeling that the work you do is meaningful to you.
Opportunity for personal growth	The work setting offers opportunities for personal growth.
Opportunity to meet people	Being able to meet and develop relationships with people in the workplace.
Pay (salary you receive)	Importance of remuneration component of workplace participation.
Recognition (for doing a good job)	Receiving recognition for your work efforts.
Control over work projects	Controlling the projects you work on.
Fair bosses	Bosses treat you fairly.
Use of your work knowledge (and ability)	Opportunity to use your knowledge and ability in the workplace.
Work conditions (safe, clean, comfortable)	Physical conditions are safe, clean and comfortable.

We have separated the work value data into two sections: work value profiles and work value changes. We have developed the value profiles by analysing the pre-PID data supplied to us, in the following format:

Highest ranked values before PID.

Lowest ranked values before PID.

Value importance: before PID.

We then examined the work value change that occurred as a result of the whistleblowing experiences by comparing the before and after PID data. This is presented in the following format:

Highest ranked values: before-after change

Highest ranked values: upwards change

Highest ranked values: downwards change

Lowest ranked values: before-after change

Value importance change.

All of this data was extracted from the general data table which appears on p.73 and which is based on an N of 94.

A. Profile of the Whistleblower

We have no way of verifying the accuracy of the whistleblowers' assessment of their work values prior to their PID since we interviewed them after their PID experience. However they did not indicate to the interviewers that they had any problem casting their mind back to the way they felt about these values before their disclosures.



Highest Ranked Values: Before PID

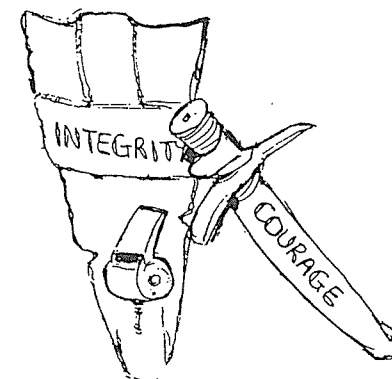
This table provides a rank ordering of work values before the whistleblowing took place.

Work Values	Number of Responses	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=102)	Rank Order Before PID
Achievement in work	86	84	1
Contribution to society	76	75	2
Use of work knowledge/ability	75	74	3
Meaningful work	70	69	4
Interesting job	66	65	5
Fair bosses	63	62	6
Independence in work	59	58	7
Influence in work	51	50	8
Proud to work for department	50	49	9
Opportunity for personal growth	49	48	10
Co-workers pleasant/capable	46	45	11
Control over work projects	46	45	11
Job security	45	44	13
Recognition for doing good job	43	42	14
Work conditions	37	36	15
Opportunity to meet people	30	29	16
Advancement	28	27	17
Convenient work hours	25	25	18
Work benefits (e.g. sick leave)	22	22	19
Pay	21	21	20
Job status	19	19	21

Discussion

One of the interesting findings here concerns work values that were rated as *very important* by more than half the sample. These are the first 7 values listed. A closer examination of the data revealed that 65% of the 102 whistleblowers rated at least 5 of those 7 work values as *very important*, and a high 20% gave all 7 top priority. This shows a remarkable consistency across the sample. In fact, hardly any of them regarded these 7 work values as *unimportant* (see General Data table on p.73), but keep in mind the different sample size used in that table - see note on p.59.

We examined these 7 "primary" work values for what they told us about public sector whistleblowers. Five of the 7 values: **achievement, use of work knowledge, meaningful work, interesting job, and independence**, offer a profile of people who seek personal satisfaction above all else from the workplace - people who value the fulfilment of having a rewarding job. The remaining 2 "primary" values are highly significant and introduce important elements which help to delineate the profile. On top of needing to feel that their work is contributing to their personal well-being, they also need to feel that it is making a **contribution to the welfare of their society**. This altruistic element is conspicuously absent for people who are in the job purely for the status, money or power - material rewards which whistleblowers rank very low. The fact that **fair bosses** is one of the primary 7 values indicates that these people have a strong sense of fair play which includes an expectation that management will correct wrongdoing when whistleblowers report it.



Lowest Ranked Values: Before PID

Work Values	No of Responses*	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=102)	Rank Order
Convenient work hours	23	23	1
Job status	20	20	2
Advancement	20	20	2
Work benefits (e.g. sick leave)	18	18	4
Opportunity to meet people	16	16	5
Proud to work for department	10	10	6
Work conditions	10	10	6
Control over work projects	9	9	8
Pay	8	8	9
Job security	7	7	10
Opportunity for personal growth	6	6	11
Recognition for doing good job	5	5	12
Influence in work	5	5	12
Co-workers pleasant/capable	4	4	14
Fair bosses	4	4	14
Interesting job	3	3	16
Independence in work	2	2	17
Meaningful work	2	2	17
Use of knowledge/ability	1	1	19
Contribution to society	1	1	19
Achievement in work	1	1	19

* It is important to note the reverse logic here. Those work values that ranked high are in fact the ones regarded as least important by whistleblowers before PID..

Discussion

In spite of the fact that quantities are low here we still have a mirror image of the previous table. Our "primary seven" values hardly rate a mention on the unimportant scale. This verifies our findings from the previous table that whistleblowers almost universally rate these values as important. The top five values on this table (which means they were listed as unimportant) are the same five which appear on the bottom of the very important scale.

The very low numbers registered across the board on this unimportant scale shows that these whistleblowers consistently regarded all the 21 work values as important before their disclosure. They are low in spite of the fact that we amalgamated data from the 3 unimportant columns; whereas the highest ranked values were taken off only one column: *very important*.

Value Importance: Before PID

The last observation becomes even clearer when we combined the data from all 6 columns from the General Data table (p.73), thereby allowing us to compare the small *unimportant* total with the very large aggregate from the 3 *important* columns.

	Aggregate Responses Before PID n=1974	Percent of Total Responses
Important work values	1809	92
Unimportant work values	165	8

Discussion

This table tells us that an overwhelming majority of responses (92%) were positive about the 21 nominated work values before PID.

B. Work Value Changes

When analysing the before-after changes in whistleblowers' assessment of the importance of these work values, it is necessary to keep in mind the differing workplace situations of our sample at the time of interview. It appears that the changes are affected by the employment status of the whistleblower. At the time of interview that status was:

- * 68% of respondents were employed in the Queensland Public Sector
- * 8% of respondents were employed elsewhere
- * 24% of respondents were unemployed
- * 1% did not answer the question.³⁶

As we stated previously, we cannot be completely satisfied that whistleblowers were able to detach their post-PID answers from their immediate workplace reality. An example of our uncertainty can be found in the way the work value **achievement in work** dropped from number 1 position before PID to number 6 position after PID. This could mean that whistleblowing experiences are so intense that they actually have a long-term impact on work values. In the example we are using, the whistleblower remains in the PID workplace, or enters a new workplace, with a framework that no longer emphasises **achievement** as a value. However it could be that whistleblowing experiences only have a situation-specific impact on work values, which are degraded only for the duration of employment in the toxic workplace.

Now, whether the pre-PID work values return when the whistleblower is taken out of the workplace is a big question. The fact that we were not using a longitudinal research design made it impossible to answer this question. As the reader progresses through the value data it is important to bear these observations in mind.

Highest Ranked Values: Before-After Change

Value	Number of Responses	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=94)	Rank Order After PID	Shift
Fair bosses	63	67	1	+5
Use of work knowledge/ability	61	65	2	+1
Meaningful work	53	56	3	+1
Independence in work	51	54	4	+3
Contribution to society	49	52	5	-3
Achievement in work	48	51	6	-5
Interesting job	47	50	7	-2
Opportunity for personal growth	43	46	8	+2
Influence in work	43	46	8	0
Control over work projects	42	45	10	+1
Job security	40	43	11	+2
Work conditions	38	40	12	+3
Co-workers pleasant/capable	37	38	13	-2
Recognition for doing good job	34	36	14	0
Convenient work hours	28	30	15	+3
Pay	26	28	16	+4
Work benefits (e.g. sick leave)	25	27	17	+2
Opportunity to meet people	24	26	18	-2
Proud to work for department	21	22	19	-10
Advancement	18	19	20	-3
Job status	14	15	21	0

Discussion

In the data presented above we tabulate the work values preference pattern that was reshaped by the traumatic events of the whistleblowing experience. We

have also provided simple measures of values shifts in the final column of the table. These measures are made by noting the movement in the *before* and *after* PID rank orderings. Shifts are expressed positively if values move up the rank order, and expressed negatively if they move down.

When we look at what has happened to work values in the post-PID period it is important to bear in mind the previous discussion, particularly the final point of that discussion which refers to two possible interpretations of the value shifts: short-term, situationally controlled value shifts; and long-term shifts.

Highest Ranked Values: Upwards Change

<u>Value</u>	<u>Shift</u>
Fair bosses	+5
Pay	+4
Independence in work	+3
Work conditions	+3
Convenient work hours	+3
Work benefits (e.g. sick leave)	+2
Use of work knowledge/ability	+1
Meaningful work	+1
Opportunity for personal growth	+1
Control over work projects	+1
Job security	+1

We can see marked deterioration in the ranking of some key values. As could be expected, **proud to work for the department** dropped 10 places. This indicates a situation-specific response; i.e. the whistleblowers could no longer feel proud to work for the department in which they made their PIDs. Many felt that they had lost the desire to be associated with a department which had treated an honest person with such contempt; had endeavoured to protect the wrongdoer; and was apparently not interested in eliminating corruption.

Highest Ranked Values: Downwards Change

<u>Value</u>	<u>Shift</u>
Proud to work for department	-10
Achievement in work	-5
Contribution to society	-3
Advancement	-3
Interesting job	-2
Co-workers pleasant/capable	-2
Opportunity to meet people	-2

However the *after* answer on this value was different for those whistleblowers who had already left the PID workplace by the time of interview. In these cases the drop in importance was either not so marked, e.g. [206], or actually increased in importance, e.g. [248] who felt that if she did get another job it had become *very important* to her to be able to feel proud of her employing organisation.

Even some whistleblowers who were in the same PID workplace at the time of interview rated this value as *more important after* their PID, telling us that they didn't even register that this could be important to them before, but that when they realised they could no longer feel proud of their workplace, they discovered they had lost something of value.

This table also shows a deterioration in the work value of **achievement** (dropped 5 places), and in the desire to make a **contribution to society** (dropped 3). These deteriorations are consistent with workers who have lost pride not only in their workplace, but also in their work. **Advancement** also dropped 3 places in the very important rating. As one whistleblower put it, "I know I'm not going to get it [advancement] while I stay here [in the PID workplace]." This drop in importance may be more indicative of a realistic assessment of the whistleblower's future in the PID workplace than a long term deterioration in the value. Many whistleblowers still in the same job indicated that it was difficult for them to rate these work values other than in the context of a workplace which had become decidedly user-hostile.

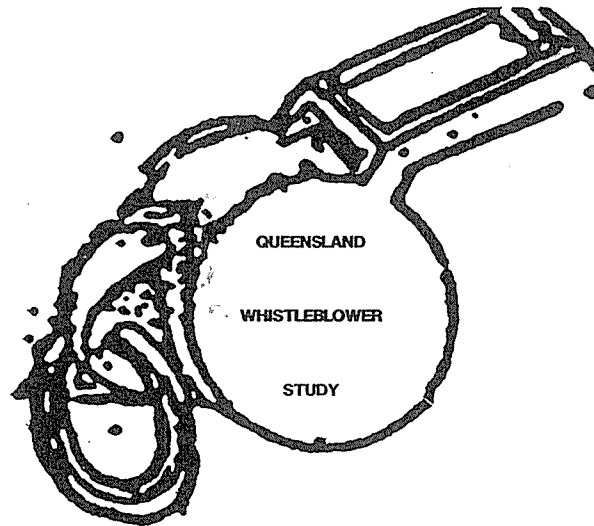
Having fair bosses became much more important (increased 5 places), as whistleblowers realised how much difference it would have made had they enjoyed this advantage. **Independence in work** also increased in value, jumping 3 places. The whistleblowers seemed to assume (perhaps incorrectly) that had they enjoyed this advantage they may possibly have been somewhat insulated from the worst of the reprisals.

As could be expected with workers who have been turned overnight into the most expendable of employees, those values which indicate that a person is mainly in the job just to earn a living, i.e. the **pay** (up 4); **work conditions** (up 3); **work benefits** (up 2); **convenient work hours** (up 3), all increased in importance. What is surprising is that these increases were not even higher. As one whistleblower put it: "I'm disillusioned with my work situation. I'm in the job for myself now" [197].

One interesting observation in this table is that the 'primary 7' values still rank as the 7 most important even though their order has changed. Another very significant factor is that numerically whistleblowers ticked the *very important* boxes overall much less frequently after their PID than before (20% less in fact). Perhaps one of our sample has provided an explanation for this overall decline in the importance of these work values to whistleblowers: "I used to care and be diligent and honest etc. Now I have seen too much rotten corruption in the system and I ask myself why I need to embrace those values I always considered were so very important" [174].

Since the primary 7 values remain in place (although with a slight reordering) this would indicate that the whistleblowers attitude to work has not changed markedly, although we know that their workplace has become a more hostile arena. However in order to survive in this level of occupational toxicity they need to provide themselves with a more self-protecting outlook. This trend is reflected in the upward change table where the pay, benefits, conditions, and convenient work hours are shown to have become more important.

This movement towards a more self-focussed work attitude is reflected in the downward change table which shows a loss of pride in both workplace and work and an overall reduction in the social contribution outlook.



Lowest Ranked Values: Before-After Change

Value	Number of Responses	Percent of Whistleblowers (N=94)	Rank Order After PID	Shift
Proud to work for department	43	46	1	+5
Advancement	34	36	2	+0
Job status	32	34	3	-1
Convenient work hours	26	28	4	-3
Job security	20	21	5	-5
Recognition for doing a good job	20	21	5	-7
Opportunity to meet people	19	20	7	-2
Opportunity for personal growth	19	20	7	-4
Work benefits (e.g. sick leave)	18	19	9	-5
Control over work projects	18	19	9	-1
Co-workers pleasant/capable	18	19	9	+5
Pay	16	17	12	-3
Influence in work	15	16	13	-1
Meaningful work	14	15	14	+3
Work conditions	13	14	15	-9
Interesting job	12	13	16	0
Achievement in work	12	13	16	+3
Fair bosses	12	13	16	+2
Contribution to society	11	12	19	0
Use of work knowledge/ability	10	11	20	-1
Independence in work	8	9	21	-4

Discussion

The data in this table, which, like the table on p.64 is an amalgamation of the 3 *unimportant* columns, verifies the information obtained from the *very important* column changes. Those values which indicate a more self protecting attitude to the workplace (e.g. **interesting job, recognition for doing a good job, job security**) have increased, while the primary 7 values remain stable, with only 1 slipping to 8th position. (Please remember a negative shift in this table represents an increase in importance.)

Value Importance Change

	Total Responses Before PID	Percent	Total Responses After PID	Percent
Important work values	1809	92	1584	80
Unimportant work values	165	8	390	20

Discussion

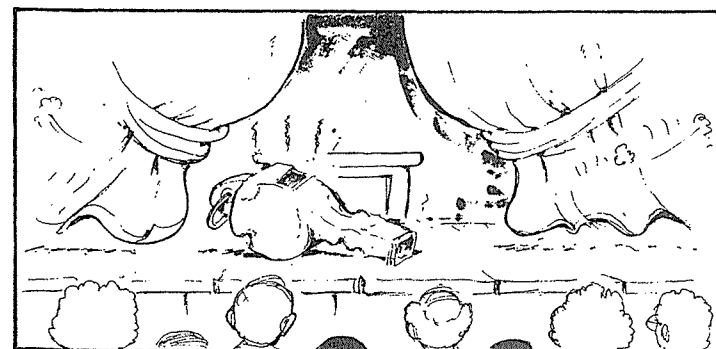
Overall these figures (from the General Data table, p.73) show a significant swing towards a perception that these work values are now less important. (Only 8% of total value responses were registered as unimportant pre-PID, and this increased to 20% after the whistleblowing). What this seems to demonstrate above all else is a general disillusionment with work which, as previously cautioned, could be PID workplace - specific, or alternatively could represent a more permanent shift in attitude to work.

Work Values: General Data*

Ranking	1		2		3		4		5		6	
Work Values	Very Important		Fairly Important		Marginally Important		Marginally Unimportant		Fairly Unimportant		Very Unimportant	
PID	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After
Achievement in work	78	48	13	25	2	9	0	6	0	2	1	4
Advancement (promotion)	26	18	35	27	14	15	6	14	7	6	6	14
Benefits (sick leave, holiday pay, etc)	19	25	26	27	31	24	9	8	7	5	2	5
Proud (to work for department)	48	21	25	15	11	15	6	9	1	13	3	21
Contribution (to society)	70	49	17	17	6	17	1	5	0	1	0	5
Convenient work hours	24	28	30	20	18	20	9	10	7	8	6	8
Co-workers (pleasant and capable)	42	37	37	30	11	9	4	9	0	5	0	4
Independence in work	55	51	28	26	9	9	0	1	1	4	1	3
Influence in work	47	43	30	21	12	15	4	7	0	5	1	3
Interesting job	60	47	25	25	6	10	2	4	1	5	0	3
Job security (permanency)	40	40	30	18	18	16	5	3	1	8	0	9
Job status	17	14	27	22	33	26	9	7	4	15	4	10
Meaningful work	65	53	20	15	7	12	1	8	1	4	0	2
Opportunity for personal growth	44	43	29	18	16	14	3	8	1	3	1	8
Opportunity to meet people	29	24	28	16	23	35	8	9	4	6	2	4
Pay (salary you receive)	20	26	36	32	30	20	3	8	4	5	1	3
Recognition (for doing a good job)	39	34	31	25	19	15	1	9	3	5	1	6
Control over work projects	43	42	31	21	12	13	5	7	2	4	1	7
Fair bosses	61	63	19	13	10	6	2	4	0	4	2	4
Use of your work knowledge (and ability)	69	61	17	17	7	6	0	4	0	4	1	2
Work conditions (safe, clean, comfortable)	34	38	30	24	20	19	8	7	2	6	0	0

* All data here based on N=94 to facilitate pre and post PID comparisons.

SUMMARY



SUMMARY

In the summary to the first report **Unshielding the Shadow Culture**, the following statement appears:

The men and women who came forward to talk (sometimes for the first time) about their whistleblowing experiences, had pushed against the windows of public sector accountability: windows usually closed, stuck fast with rusty hinges. We should be angry at what the whistleblowers allowed us to see inside. But more than that; we should be angry that workplace democracy - the right of everyone in the public sector to speak out against wrongdoing - is not thriving, is not strong. In fact [workplace] democracy is on a life support system - it is nearly dead, propped up the illusions woven by ignorant and power-obsessed politicians and senior bureaucrats.

As the first report called for a display of anger, this report asks for insight, compassion and action. In these pages, for the first time, is told the story of the wounded worker. The employee of conscience who crosses the "line" and reports wrongdoing. We have followed, at a safe distance, and chronicled the emotional, physical and financial suffering that tragically entangle disclosure experiences.

Our principal findings are:

1. **71 % of whistleblowers experienced official reprisals.**
2. **The 3 most common forms of official reprisals were: reprimand, punitive transfer, and psychiatric assessment.**
3. **94 % of whistleblowers experienced unofficial reprisals.**
4. **The 3 most common forms of unofficial reprisals were: social ostracism at work, personal attacks, and increased scrutiny.**
5. **Whistleblowers experienced an average of 1.5 official reprisals.**

6. Whistleblowers experienced an average of 4.2 unofficial reprisals.
7. On average whistleblowers can expect about 6 separate attacks on them after they make public interest disclosures.
8. Almost half the sample said that their income decreased as a result of their whistleblowing.
9. The average income of the sample a year before disclosures were made was \$34,526.
10. The average income of the sample 2 years after the disclosures had dropped to \$23,442.
11. 8% of whistleblowers reported an eventual improvement in their physical health status as a result of their whistleblowing.
12. 44% of whistleblowers reported an eventual improvement in their psychological functioning.
13. 71% of whistleblowers reported deterioration in their physical health.
14. 79% of whistleblowers reported a deterioration in their emotional well-being.
15. Of those reporting eventual improved psychological functioning, the main reasons given were increased self assertiveness and self confidence.
16. The 3 major physical complaints suffered by whistleblowers were: insomnia, exhaustion and digestive disorders.
17. The most common psychological complaints suffered by whistleblowers were: anxiety, irritability, loss of emotional control, fear, inability to relax, manic behaviour, anger, frustration, bitterness, depression, listlessness, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts.

18. Whistleblowing does not impact on the primary seven work values: *achievement, contribution to society, use of work knowledge, meaningful work, interesting job and fair bosses.*
19. However whistleblowing does alter the relative importance of these values.
20. The 2 work values that experienced significant improved positions in the rank order were *fair bosses* and *pay*.
21. The 2 work values that experienced a significant downward shift in the rank order were *proud to work for department* and *achievement in work*.

What can we say in conclusion to such a saga of injustice and undeserved pain? What we know from our on-going association with some of these whistleblowers through the Whistleblowers Action Group (Qld) Inc is that their pain continues.

We are aware that, subsequent to the time of their interview, a few whistleblowers have been fortunate enough to get back into a worker-friendly and personally satisfying job, and felt that their career and therefore their life was back on track. But their pain is still more than an unpleasant memory. As one of these fortunate few put it: "I can't put it [the whistleblowing experience] behind me because it's still unfinished business - I've got no justice." [231]

When will the injustice and the pain end? Will it take a popular uprising against workplace wrongdoing to change the public sector culture so that these honest employees are honoured instead of reviled; rewarded instead of punished? What will it take to obliterate the "dobbing" label applied so unfairly to whistleblowers? How many readers of this report will be prepared to enter this worthwhile struggle against systemic corruption and take action to help repair these shattered lives?

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 When an employer forces an employee to see a psychiatrist, on threat of dismissal or other disciplinary or detrimental action:
 1. The psychiatrist must be freely chosen by the patient, in consultation with the patient's own general practitioner, in the usual way. In general, it is unethical for a psychiatrist chosen by the employer to accept such a referral.
 2. It may sometimes be in an employee's interest to see a psychiatrist recommended by the employer, e.g. if that psychiatrist has previous experience of the organisation, and knows relevant personnel, and could therefore assist in resolving the situation better than a complete outsider. The psychiatrist in this case must accept the referral only if the patient has given genuine consent. That is, the patient must have the right to refuse the consultation without fear of reprisal; and the guidelines below regarding information given to the employer must apply. Consent, given under duress, to a report being sent to the employer (e.g., threat of disciplinary action) must not be regarded as valid. An accredited interpreter must be present for the interview if the patient has any difficulties with communication.
 3. The normal ethical rules of confidentiality apply to the interview and to any information supplied by the patient. The only exception is where, in the psychiatrist's opinion, the patient poses a significant danger to specific people or to the community at large.
 4. Any report or correspondence arising from the consultation should go only to the patient's general practitioner in the usual way, subject to the consent of the patient. The communication which can be provided to the employer is restricted to a formal certificate stating fitness or non-fitness for work. However, at the request of the patient, further details can be made available. Inclusion of the diagnosis in a certificate is not recommended, although this might be a statutory requirement for the payment of sick leave by some employers, such as state instrumentalities.
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