NEWS

Hotline needed to tackle bullying

Expert advice for staff and employers.

LACK OF CLARITY: *Inquiry witnesses concerned about where to go for help*

A new national hotline is needed to help employers and workers deal with workplace bullying, according to a federal parliamentary committee report into the issue.

The House of Representatives Employment Committee's report *Workplace bullying: we just want it to stop* made 23 recommendations to stop bullying in the workplace, which the Productivity Commission according to costs the Australian economy more than $6 billion per year.

Committee chair Amanda Rishworth (Kingston, SA) said the inquiry showed the need for early intervention and clear support channels.

"A chief concern of witnesses was the lack of clarity about what to do and where to go for help," Ms Rishworth said. "That is why we recommend … the Commonwealth government establish a new national advisory service to provide advice, assistance and resolution services to employers and workers alike."

The report also urged the federal government to work with the states and territories to enact laws similar to Victoria's 2011 amendments to the Crimes Act, widely known as Brodie's Law.

Nineteen-year-old Brodie Panlock ended her life in 2006 after constant and humiliating bullying by her co-workers in a Melbourne café. The report recommended all state and territory governments consider greater enforcement of their criminal laws in similar cases of serious workplace bullying. (See *'A slow poison'* on page 20) •

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LATEST

MYRTLE RUST THREAT

A parliamentary inquiry has learnt first-hand about the damage being done to native trees and plants by a mysterious fungal disease which was only detected in Australia two years ago.

The Climate Change, Environment and Arts Committee has detailed its findings in the second interim report of its inquiry into Australia's biodiversity in a changing climate.

At various site inspections in New South Wales and north Queensland the committee learnt more about the effect of the spread of myrtle rust throughout both states.

"This highlights the need for cooperation between all levels of government on effective invasive species management," committee chair Tony Zappia (Makin, SA) said.

Myrtle rust is thought to have originated in South America and Mexico.

It was first discovered in NSW in 2010 but it is not known how it found its way here.

The second interim report will be the last update on the inquiry's progress before the final report and recommendations are released next year. •

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