INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT
Inappropriate conduct

Many participants described witnessing a diverse array of poor behaviour and associated conduct within their organisation or public administration. These conduct issues have been roughly grouped into related topics.

Bullying and nepotism

The most frequently reported conduct was bullying and harassment. A total of 353 participants from every agency specifically mentioned issues of bullying or harassment:

The bullying, nepotism and favoritism within this organization is at a level I never expected to experience. It really has been a very disappointing journey.

A bullying culture currently still exists in this Department at a senior level

So much staff bullying, promotion of friends, and people in leadership positions with very low integrity who don’t lead they bully and promote friends to protect them

[redacted] would have to be the worst place where I have encountered bullying and harassment.

My manager asking me for sex

There is strong bullying and harassment taking place in this Agency and many (including me) are too fearful to make a report.

The Public Sector Values are not applied with any rigour eg bullying and harassment. In my experience the victim is blamed and simply further humiliated.

1. Executive ordering the following and putting together a list of staff 50 and over to target. 2. Bullying staff to take TSVPs [Targeted Voluntary Separation Packages] 3. Victimization of staff so they leave

Bullying is rife in this organisation particularly from Managers. At this level I’m hesitant to report this as I think it would probably make matters worse not better.
I am appalled at [redacted] has been able to bully and intimidate subordinate staff for most of his career and to have gotten away with it by the dept. It still goes on to this day.

Unfortunately [redacted] turns a blind eye to it’s BULLIES - senior members are promoted or sent to the country but the bullying continues.

Open verbal abuse of staff and patients in earshot of staff and the public. Associated belittling of staff with no opportunity to defend false accusations or provide information that would change the perceptions. No apology by manager when proven wrong. No defence by senior staff when they were at fault. Open loud verbal abuse of patients by then manager.

Many participants described experiences or work cultures marked with bullying and harassment. Some of the more graphic examples of bullying could not be included as they would likely reveal the participant’s identity. The responses further reinforce the survey’s quantitative findings, where 44% of participants had personally encountered bullying and harassment in the last five years and 35% felt their organisation was highly or extremely vulnerable to bullying and harassment.

Bullying and harassment was raised more frequently in the qualitative responses by participants from the Attorney-General’s Department, SA Health, the Department for Education, the Department for Child Protection, the Department for Human Services and the Department for Correctional Services. Whilst the number of respondents from the Courts Administration Authority is quite low, seven out of the 20 raised bullying and harassment.

When considering quantitative responses this list includes several of the worst performing agencies in relation to encountering bullying and harassment (see Appendix two). Bullying and harassment had been encountered by 43% of Attorney-General’s Department, 51% of SA Health, 41% of Department of Education, 53% of Department of Child Protection, 44% of Department of Human Services and 57% of Department for Correctional Services participants. Bullying and harassment was encountered by 37% of Courts Administration Authority participants.

Bullying was also more likely to be raised by women participants. This may not necessarily mean that men were less likely to encounter bullying, they may view the behaviour differently or may be less likely to raise it.

The qualitative feedback should serve as a catalyst for agency executives to talk with their staff, determine the nature and extent of any systemic bullying issues and implement strategies to address.

---

4: Here and throughout the report, agencies are listed in order of those most frequently raising an issue in the qualitative data to those raising an issue least frequently.
Favouritism and nepotism was also a strong theme, reported in broad terms by 181 participants:

In [redacted] there is widespread nepotism and favours done you could cut it with a knife. Bad decisions /failures are hidden from others.

I also nearly resigned due to corrupt work behaviour and favouritism.

Very recently, I have seen a clear case of nepotism/favouritism

It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.

I would like to think that we all have a say but there is too many areas where nepotism and hierarchy will come in above and tell you that you will not make that choice.

I am happy working for [redacted] but the level of corruption and nepotism is de-moralising. Nepotism, favouritism occurs daily to those close to the inner circle, whereas those who are on the outer are ostracised and blocked from opportunities.

A total of 275 participants raised issues of favouritism and poor practice in relation to employment and hiring decisions:

Mates of managers are put into management positions who are useless and cannot do that job. This makes the whole place a joke. No one will report this as it is not hard to work out who has complained.

I have witnessed people employed based on who they know and not on merit or a fair processes for all candidates.

My biggest concern is the overwhelming nepotism I have witnessed when promoting people into leadership roles. Personal networks are engaged to facilitate the appointments rather than following the prescribed process where skills and experience are scrutinized.

What has concerned me most in recent years is job appointments being made based on personal bias, while going through the motions of ‘merit selection’. 

The nepotism/favouritism that I refer to is about men being promoted over women - this is often said in this organisation by other middle management women.
General favouritism was raised most frequently by participants from the Department for Correctional Services and the Department of Human Services. Concerns with hiring issues were raised most frequently by participants from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department for Education, and the Attorney-General’s Department.

These points reflect a common theme in the quantitative data, with nepotism and favouritism being encountered by 42% of participants in the last five years and 34% feeling their organisation was highly or extremely vulnerable to this conduct. When examining agency responses this issue was raised most frequently by participants from the Department for Correctional Services (55%), the Department for Child Protection (51%) and SA Police (48%).

Favouritism and the failure to follow appropriate hiring practices are clearly areas of concern for public officers across public administration. Hiring issues were not specifically highlighted in the quantitative question concerning encountered corruption or inappropriate conduct.

It is interesting to note that the qualitative feedback highlighted the Department of the Premier and Cabinet as having potential issues with poor hiring practices yet the quantitative data on encountering nepotism and favouritism ranked this agency fourth most positively (Appendix two). This could imply that some participants may not have considered poor hiring practices when responding to whether they had encountered nepotism and favouritism. Eliciting specific feedback on hiring practices or specifying that nepotism and favouritism includes such behaviour may be an option for future surveys.
Financial issues

Financial mismanagement, misconduct, theft or fraud was raised by 149 participants:

- misappropriation of public funds by stealth
- frauding of On-Call allowance for [redacted] from 2010
- Psychiatrists and Paediatricians charge medicare for public patients (double dip). They say its in their enterprise bargaining agreement and therefore they can, but no one monitors this or has power to tell them which clients to prioritise for service e.g. the consumer who doesn’t produce a mental health plan (so they can claim medicare) or the consumer that does produce the mental health care plan allowing them to double dip.
- witnessed a senior staff member removing drugs from a trolley in the resus room
- Also, large amounts of leakage from Govt (Cabinet) Mandated contracts.
- some practices at work appear to not be following proper process, authorising expenditures not within budget, appointing staff through HR and at pay rates not relevant to the job, but concerned about repercussions if reported
- I know of a staff member who has personally stolen [redacted] over some years by saying the person was working over time, claiming sick leave when the person had no leave, claiming ARL when the person had no ARL. Eventually the person got caught and absolutely nothing got done about it because HR wanted to keep their reputation clean. State of understanding of privacy and aspects of financial appropriateness is abysmal

Men were more likely to raise financial issues as were participants from the Department for Innovation and Skills, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure.

The misuse or mismanagement of public funds should be a concern for all agencies.
Thirty nine participants spoke of public officers modifying time sheets or being paid for hours that were not worked. This appeared to be more commonly reported by participants from the Department for Correctional Services:

- Signed off her timesheet as being at work even when she was off sick for the day.

- Consultants are paid for more hours than they work and there are discrepancies with how they can double dip with private and medicare.

- Don’t know if this is covered in the survey but people falsely recording times on their timesheet i.e. reporting finishing work later than they actually did.

- Falsifying personal flexitime sheets to gain extra hours and failing to submit leave forms when taking days off work.

- A Certain Manager turns a blind eye to a staff member’s giving toil when the hours have not been worked. And gives favourable treatment due to their close friendship.

When considering the quantitative data, financial misconduct, theft or fraud (excluding procurement) was encountered by 10% of participants. When examining agency responses this was encountered most frequently by participants from Emergency services (22%), the Department for Correctional Services (15%) and the Department of Human Services (13%). This shows some synergy between the quantitative and qualitative results with the Department for Correctional Services and Department of Human Services being highlighted in both sets of data. The Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure was ranked eighth most positively amongst agencies (10%) in the quantitative data on this point. However, considering the qualitative feedback and the large expenditure projects overseen by this Department it may be in the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure’s best interest to review its practices and consult with staff as to where they perceive waste or misuse of funds to be occurring.
Flawed processes / decision making

Responses were received that described seemingly flawed processes or decision making which likely contravenes government guidelines and is not in the public interest.

A failure to follow legislation, policy or procedure was noted by 125 participants. This was often in relation to other behaviour identified by participants (for example, issues with inappropriate hiring or procurement practices):

- Destroying corporate documents without appropriate approval.
- ...fails to follow own policies and procedures and currently breaching Work Health and Safety Legislation
- Making concessions or favourable grants to organisations based on personal interest without following the due process.
- Within the last 5 years I have seen maladministration which seems to have common causes of ignorance (wilful or otherwise) of legislation; laziness and then defensiveness in correcting the situation.
- A [redacted] consultant was recently appointed at [redacted] who was not a permanent resident and did not have a visa, despite good local candidates. There are policies in place to stop this, yet it happened.

These issues were seemingly raised most frequently by participants from the Department for Education, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department for Innovation and Skills and SA Health. There were no quantitative questions specifically addressing a failure to follow legislation, policy or procedure so it is unknown how prevalent perceived breaches may be across public administration or its impact.
Sixty seven participants reported various activity which could be described as falsifying information:

Managers also refuse to fill out log sheets (or refuse to fill them out correctly) leading to admin staff having to fabricate log sheets to send in for tax compliance.

cutting and pasting risk assessments from day to day (e.g having stated a patient had been sighted when this patient had absconded and [redacted]

finance teams are used to cover up millions of dollars of variations being transferred to projects and sites that were not allocated funding

Providing jobs for friends/ relatives/ children of relatives and getting staff where no job was advertised and staff were asked to sign off that there had been a competitive process.

Selective reporting of data by management to look better

Falsifying an audit so not to fail

Responses of this kind appeared to be more common amongst Department for Education participants.

Survey participants were asked whether they had encountered incidents of falsified information and 11% of participants agreed that they had. Such responses were most frequently from participants in the Department for Correctional Services (25%), the Courts Administration Authority (16%), SA Police (14%) and the Department for Child Protection (14%). The qualitative feedback helps contextualise the potential dangerous consequences of falsifying information.

Perceived conflicts of interest in decision making was described by 58 participants:

I am aware of other junior staff who approached me regarding a potential conflict of interest matter, involving tens of thousands of dollars regarding a senior manager directing organisational funds for training courses in which he was a director/teacher/financial beneficiary to.

Conflicts of interest were hand-waved away, or managed in a way that suggested that senior staff didn’t feel that the issue was improper (running a side business during core hours on business assets).

Undeclared conflict of interest between staff and industry body

...stacked with a combination of political appointments and industry beneficiaries (who regularly make policy decisions that they benefit from)
Such issues were more commonly raised by men and appears to be more commonly raised by participants from the Department of Innovation and Skills and the Department for Environment and Water. Conflicts of interest were raised more frequently in the quantitative component of the survey, being encountered by 28% of participants. Conflicts of interest were encountered more often by participants from the Department for Correctional Services (42%), the Department for Child Protection (32%) and SA Police (32%).

It is inevitable that conflicts of interest will occur. However, they must be identified and appropriately managed.

Twenty participants described issues with poor procurement processes:

- Probity breaches in procurement are not uncommon here. Usually because of lack of resources, or ignorance of correct probity practice.

- I have witnessed (and reported on two separate occasions) probity in procurement/fraud and serious harassment issues to Executive.

- I have been involved in procurement processes recently where I have been uncomfortable with the processes. Not really to a level that I would say is corruption - more poor practice and favouritism - but I do not trust that if I reported it I would not suffer any professional consequences.

Eleven participants discussed actual issues of inappropriate acceptance of gifts or benefits:

- Working in health for some years, there are guidelines for public servants accepting gifts or goods. This barely covers Medical staff accepting gifts dinners holidays etc. I know the guidelines were recently reviewed, but some medical staff continue to ignore the rules and do whatever they want. This is mostly accepting significant gifts from Pharmaceutical Companies, which is unethical and leaves them open to corruption.

- Not following proper government processes. Receiving discounts for goods from clients.

The combined deleterious impact of these areas of flawed processes and decision making is not known. However, they are clear markers of lapses in integrity. These points were also captured in the quantitative component of the survey, with procurement issues encountered by 6%, bribery / inappropriate acceptance of gifts by 5% and perverting the course of justice by 4%.
Work performance

Participants also raised issues of perceived failures in their workplace to meet appropriate performance standards. Fifty participants described aspects of mismanagement of those receiving care. As would be expected this was dominated by participants from SA Health (33 out of 50):

- administrative mismanagement of department, leading to decisions causing direct compromise in patient care
- emotional and psychological abuses towards children and vulnerable clients
- Health sector is understaffed and has inadequate resources to deal with workload demands. I feel this opens the organisation up to mismanagement of clients and staff
- The health department has been very poorly managed for years, with deteriorating quality of care secondary to this.
- ...inappropriate conduct, bullying, mental abuse, intimidation and corruption, and most of all THE IMPACT THAT THE ABOVE HAS ON OUR CHILDREN OUR CLIENTS.

When mismanagement of those receiving care was raised in the quantitative data, those most frequently agreeing were from the Department for Child Protection (25%), followed by SA Health (20%) and the Department for Correctional Services (19%).

Thirty seven participants specifically raised the failure of staff to fulfil duties:

- claiming to be ‘working from home’
- use of work time to conduct secondary employment

Poor management practice that leads to lack of accountability, non-performance of duties and filtered reporting of outcomes.

- ...go do their grocery shopping in work hours without working late or coming in early to make up time
- Staff member played [redacted] 2 hrs daily which impacted on others workload.
A failure to fulfil duties was reportedly encountered much more frequently than this feedback would suggest. In the quantitative component of the survey, 23% of participants agreed they had encountered failures to fulfil duties. This was most frequently reported by participants from the Department for Correctional Services (37%), the Department for Child Protection (33%) and the Courts Administration Authority (28%). Thirty five participants made comment on there being ‘dead wood’ or general incompetence / unprofessional behaviour:

Some staff have been in their positions too long and are not willing or able to adapt, change or improve their work practices

Lazy workers who seem to be slipping through the cracks

We all know of people who shouldn’t be in their positions, yet still are.

Incompetence without accountability

Misuse of power and resources

Public officers often have access to a broad range of public resources. Agencies should emphasise to staff that these resources are for the purpose of fulfilling their public duties, not ‘perks’ for their private use. Twenty eight participants discussed situations relating to the misuse of government resources:

witnessing inappropriate personal use of government resources in relation to personal business.

Abuse of vehicles.

Inappropriate use of government owned equipment for private use.

using public service staff to conduct duties arising from private practice

Thirty three participants discussed what they perceived to be a misuse of power:

In every area of government I have worked I have seen abuse of powers to intimidate junior staff.

I have witnessed a significant level of nepotism and abuse of positional power over the past 4-5 years

The move to contract positions correlates directly with an increase of abuse of power and sharp erosion of willingness to report bullying/nepotism/unfair work practices.
Misuse of power was also recorded in the quantitative component of the survey, being encountered by 23% of participants.

Misuse of power was reported most frequently by participants from the Department for Correctional Services (31%), the Department for Child Protection (29%), Emergency Services (27%) and SA Health (27%). This issue was clearly raised by more participants in the quantitative component of the survey. However, this is likely due to only a limited number of participants expressly describing inappropriate conduct in this way. Issues of nepotism, poor hiring processes, bullying of subordinates etc could all be seen as abuses of power.

Confidentiality

The final section in the survey involved questions regarding the use of generic or shared login details to access systems holding sensitive and confidential information. Thirty three percent of participants reported being able to access such systems using generic or shared login details.

Fifty one participants commented on confidential information not being secure:

Files for [redacted] are hardcopies and can be accessed by anyone in the building as they are stored [redacted] where anyone staff member in the Department can access.

stores all National Police Clearance (NPC) information in shared drives. This includes NPC information relating to staff, including HR staff! Completely inappropriate.

employees personal details are in a shared system and it is accessible to all staff with access. Staff are NOT aware they can REQUEST to have their personal details ‘hidden’. It should not have to be requested, it should just be DONE. If I want someone to know where I live I WILL tell them, not have them find out through a work system.

staff HR files are kept in a walkway next to photocopier- so anyone could access files inappropriately or remove if they wanted to.

peoples personal details namely income protection or TPD claims and all their medical records attached should not be available to view by other staff, however, this is currently available for all staff to view.
This issue appears to have been raised more frequently by participants from the Department for Innovation and Skills and the Department for Child Protection. However, the greatest number of respondent raising the issue came from SA Health (17 out of 51).

Thirty three participants also reported occasions where confidentiality had been breached:

- disclosing of organisation specific confidential information to clients.
- I had my personal records accessed by a staff member at my work
- I am very aware that personal details have been looked at by some management members and then shared and discussed with other staff and outside of work in public places. I am also aware that management have looked at staffs personal health files and shared that information.
- using systems to find out personal information about family and friends

Shared login details to databases with sensitive information presents a risk which agencies must address. The qualitative data highlights situations where confidential information is stored in an insecure and improper manner. Both public officers and members of the public using government services have an expectation that their personal information will be handled with due sensitivity and care. The responses suggest that this may not always be the case.

Discrimination

A small group of participants specifically described encountering what they perceived to be discrimination in the workplace. Fourteen spoke of discrimination in a general sense whereas 26 described sexism, 24 racism and 11 ageism:

- overt discrimination of older workers in an effort to get rid of them from the organization
- Gender equity, White Ribbon and diversity are now embarrassing for all the females who busted their butt to get where they are.
- I have heard this person make racist comments such as, ‘towel head, rag head, wog bog’ and calling female aboriginals ‘gins’.
- racism, sexist remarks, remarks about women getting pregnant and never returning to the PS, as women age their waists get larger, telling an employee they are too fat
Some comments related to perceived excessive favouritism and promotion of particular groups rather than their being vilified or rejected. Low numbers reporting sexism make identifying particular agencies where this issue was more frequently reported difficult. Six participants described what could potentially be understood as discrimination against their discipline or profession:

"Inequity exists in the application of rules depending on discipline eg Nursing staff often held to account including reporting to APHRA whereas Med staff involved in same incident no repercussions"

Management / human resources

Negative comments towards management was a consistent theme in responses. A total of 379 participants directly attributed varied aspects of poor conduct they had encountered, to their managers or senior leadership figures:

"the culture and work environment has been toxic mainly due to particular people in positions of power that did what they wanted, went unquestioned and ruined/stalled many good peoples careers whilst promoting people they could manipulate and control."

"A whole team of people left because of mismanagement and abuse of power of Manager at [redacted] and no one asked anything."

"I am really concerned in relation to the Bullying Culture that is ingrained within [redacted] - which starts at the highest level of management."

"The code of Conduct is often used as a threat by managers with over inflated egos to make staff do as told even if the manager’s approach is not the most effective way."

"...accepted as receiving a psychological injury due to the direct result of bullying of my line manager."

"Management at [redacted] needs to be accountable and transparent and not promote their mates over other qualified persons."

"The level of bullying, manipulation, nepotism, duplicity and lack of accountability by those in charge is outstanding."

"Yes - one issue that arises regularly is the issue of workplace bullying in the context of the judiciary...There are few workplaces where the power imbalance is so great and where staff are subjected to harassment and bullying on a regular basis."
The responses were often in relation to perceived bullying, favouritism, hiring decisions and poor decision making.

A further 114 participants described poor leadership, planning and accountability:

> I have experienced really inadequate leadership in the State Government agencies I have worked in (and have worked as a leader myself), which creates a real sense of distrust and concern for employees at all levels.

> half of the misery of the world is caused by people whose only talent is to worm their way into positions for which they otherwise have no competence.

> Short term budgeting by management causing financial long term false economies in the workplace.

> people in senior positions in my organization, are not interested in staff moral, empathy, as it is all money orientated.

> The state of this organisation has clearly suffered for years due to the mismanagement and favouritism at the executive level. Staff have suffered a high price some even having to resign from government.

> Please look into [redacted] managerial practices / gross mismanagement.

> I think that the level of accountability from senior staff is sadly lacking

These comments were more common from participants from the Department for Innovation and Skills, SA Health, the Department for Education and the Department for Human Services.

Fifty two participants commented on poor internal communication, transparency or perceived lies. This was typically in relation to management style and organisational culture:

> ...staff not informed about changes or key information leading up to work dissatisfaction and isolation

> I would also like to see more transparency and communication internally, as well as senior staff asking for feedback on current practices/procedures from employees, rather than a ‘do as I say or else approach’.

> Non- transparency. Failure to pass on information.

> If you speak out, HR can be used to ‘investigate’ you, with no transparency or accountability for HR or executives.

> The organization I work for is so disorganized. Leading hands and supervisors lie through there teeth...
It appears that responses were more common amongst SA Health and Department of Primary Industries and Regions’ participants. Staff may not always know all the reasons behind business decisions. However, the survey responses highlight the need for agencies to consider when and how they share information with their staff.

Another theme to emerge regarding management practices was a perceived failure to address known poor conduct or under performance. A total of 111 participants suggested that management either could not address poor behaviour in their workplace or did not attempt to do so:

I gave up and endured bullying when my next up manager refused to address this issue.

The general manager is aware and turns a blind eye especially with those he is good friends with.

Failure to recognise the need to performance manage individuals who do not fulfil their duties.

I feel that often complaints are not taken seriously or validated as it is too hard for management to deal with.

Acceptance of bullying or abuse by managers in a team so not to create work for themselves sorting it out

We do not performance manage underperforming staff in our service- despite clear evidence this should occur

Collectively these pressures mean that managers/organisations eventually give up and poor performance prevails.

ie staff who can’t be managed don’t come to work, get put off on pay- for doing the wrong thing etc. HR take years to do anything while damage is being done.

The inability to adequately deal with grossly underperforming staff is of specific concern to me.

Appropriate performance management is critical. Agencies must ensure staff are supported to carry out their responsibilities and, where performance does not meet expectations, that their performance is properly addressed.
Concerns about Human Resource (HR) sections and staff were raised by 54 participants.

It is hard to be honest and report some things e.g. bullying, nepotism when the people doing the things are right at the top of the organisation. HR does little to nothing and the consequences on your term contract are never favourable.

I do not believe in my particular workplace that bullying will ever be stopped as HR is there to only protect managers.

Most of the time HR is completely ineffective as a manager or as an employee. They never seem to be accountable for failing to support you/staff, yet i am accountable for everything i do.

Human Resources at Local level do NOT investigate or take appropriate action.

HR is seen as protecting management, and upper management as protecting themselves.

HR Department has been ‘weaponized’ in [redacted] to push/intimidate staff into complying with managerial/executive/and political decisions.

Pressure to behave inappropriately

Several participants suggested that there was sometimes pressure on organisations or individuals to behave inappropriately. Thirteen participants mentioned such pressure as coming from senior management and elected members of local government:

My biggest concern is inappropriate interference from Elected Members (Local Council) especially when the CEO and Managers are on contracts and therefore open to influence to protect there continuing jobs.

Several incidents of senior state government officials trying to advocate for a particular applicant for state nomination to be approved (either priority processing for faster decision or bending the rules to make them eligible).

I witnessed strong politicisation of my previous agency [redacted] in the last few years.
A total of thirty eight participants specifically mentioned pressure from Ministers or a general sense of feeling political pressure to act in particular ways:

---

**Political interference** so that the department’s work is directed toward political gain rather than what experts within the department advise

I was once asked by my manager to influence an application from a person with senior political connections.

Inappropriate accounting for activity due to political pressure to fund the activity but trying to be creative with how it appears in the accounts.

The golden parachute for political persons into plum roles

Abusive conduct [redacted] towards public servants - for not ‘bending the rules’ to change a finalized selection report to give the role to a Labor mate.

---

**Consequences of inappropriate conduct**

A number of participants described negative consequences from being exposed to inappropriate conduct. Forty five described varied stress and health issues:

---

Internal HR investigation of Harassment woeful and sided with the woman, when the man was innocent. He had a mental breakdown and had to leave work. For consideration – too revealing?

It’s the staff that are treating the patients that are under lots of pressure by the admin people who are sitting on their bottoms that get paid for what making peoples lives a misery.

I love my work but the poor treatment by my manager is impacting on my mental well being

The micro management literally makes other members unwell, I am watching my co-workers drop like flies

No support from leadership, he is not Performance managed and because I have watched it for so long, it has affected my mental health.
Fifteen participants described losing their job or feeling forced to leave due to inappropriate conduct. Forty three participants described seeing others experience this:

The situation has become so bad that I have now opted to resign from this organization

Whilst she was protected by upper management, I lost my permanent position

I am aware of several issues of misconduct (as per the bullet points on the previous page) in my previous agency. As a result, I chose to leave because I didn’t feel confident in raising my concerns internally because they implicated my direct supervisor and the Chief Executive.

I reported the behaviour to management. Nobody cared. I chose not to renew my contract at that workplace.

My colleague was eventually forced to leave their position and the organisation as nothing was done to fix the situation.

This person has made life unbearable for so many people and made them lose their careers.

Experienced people are being marginalised, bullied and made redundant because they know more than their Managers and are therefore viewed as a threat not an asset.

Despite legitimate issues, those who are bullied generally have to continue to operate within psychologically unsafe environments. Poor leadership does not get addressed and good people leave the Dept.

The Chief Executive has created, promotes, participates in, perpetuates and encourages a toxic culture and environment based on favouritism, bullying, intimidation and harassment [redacted] Many people have and are still leaving the organisation as they are not able to do anything about this issue, many people who work here are currently mentally affected by the continuous and relentless bullying and harassment.

These responses illustrate the human impact of inappropriate conduct. Agency leaders must provide safe and respectful working environments.
Survey responses indicated that there is a perception that, for the perpetrator at least, there were no consequences for inappropriate conduct. Forty seven participants described how perpetrators would get away with inappropriate conduct:

- generally speaking bullying and harassment is rife and is not addressed satisfactorily, and in many instances the perpetrator remains unscathed
- no action taken when personal have been seen to do the wrong thing.
- ...I find that the people doing the wrong thing are a protected species as evidenced by the fact they all have a long history of doing the wrong thing and yet are still employed...
- ...no one is held accountable, good people are leaving because of it
- To date nothing has happened & those involved continue on with no repercussions.
- perpetrator has continued employment for 10+ years while many others, including myself have either left of our own accord or had our professional credibility destroyed. Formal complaint after formal complaint has been lodged and still nothing changes or happens.

Twice this number of participants (94) specifically mentioned there being no consequences for those in senior positions / management:

- No supervisor has ever been found to have been guilty of any poor behavior in the whole time I’ve been here, they look after their own and turn on anyone who speaks up, even if there has been a consistent pattern of bullying over a long time to many workers.
- There are untouchable people in the directorship of [redacted]. Thank goodness those working on the grass roots are honest!
- items that should be dealt with in-house but were not as it is upper management protection.
- After multiple complaints about this Team manager he was just shuffled sideways to a position of the same seniority ie Team manager in a different team
- People in higher positions than ones own are protected!
I am amazed that some senior executives continue to be ignored for their maladministration.

When Supervisors, Managers are involved in incidents it’s always covered up were as staff receiving supervision records and or investigated.

Always seem to be ‘threatened’ by management with misconduct etc however management seem to have a licence to ‘do what they want’

It is common knowledge that senior public servants (directors and above) are never held accountable for their maladministration actions.

These comments appear more common amongst staff from the Department of Primary Industries and Regions and SA Police. Given the Department of Primary Industries and Regions was otherwise rated more consistently positive than other agencies in the quantitative feedback, this feedback could be further explored with staff.

Twenty three participants said that inappropriate conduct was often hidden or that perpetrators were clever in masking their conduct to prevent detection:

Inappropriate behavior is rarely blatant. It’s subtle.

Often bullying occurs in a ‘passive’ way which may not be obvious to others and could in fact be difficult to prove.

This is a complex area and can be highly interpretive/complex (not clear cut). Some things are black and white which make reporting more straight forward, however bullying/favouritism/not fulfilling role etc are a lot more subjective and if you report that people in positions of power can easily manipulate events to cast doubt on the integrity of the whistle blower, so it can be a very vexed thing to report.

There is a manipulation of the recruitment process to make it seem like these people have ‘failed’ to meet the criteria to keep their jobs and being told their exemplary work history and above target performance will not be considered. it is smoke and mirrors and hard to prove but if you know the system you can see straight through it. I believe I have witnessed this firsthand.

It’s done slyly and perps are careful to cover tracks.
Thirty eight participants specifically mentioned that inappropriate conduct was seemingly rewarded, often with promotions:

Staff that cannot be managed or are difficult to manage seem to be given promotions as a way of getting ‘rid’ of them from departments

...that I reported to management and we perused a formal behavior management process. Both staff now have higher paid positions and I am not aware of any negative consequences for their behavior.

The workers suffer and pick up the pieces with no recognition whilst these selfish leaders ruin the workplace with lack of understanding of the business and then move on to a higher paid role as they have ticked the boxes but in reality their presence and changes was a hindrance to the business.

I have seen terrible criminal behavior by managers only rewarded by promotions, then seen them at the pub laughing about it.

I feel nothing is ever going to happen or change, in fact some of the main perpetrators have been promoted.

Rewarding bad behaviour is the ‘norm’.

There are no consequences for bad behaviour. Bad behaviour in [redacted] is rewarded.

Seven participants stated that inappropriate conduct was actively encouraged by the organisation:

Bullying and harassment is rife in [redacted] especially in the past 3 to 4 years and reporting it has done little as the Executive team at the realm seems to have encouraged it and ignored it.

The higher you go up the ladder in nursing the more of a bully you can become due to pressure from above to meet standards and time frames.

Staff encouraged to lie during recent [redacted] accreditation to surveyors and ‘tell them what they want to hear’ attitude is wrong!!
Thirty participants discussed a need to increase punishment or have consequences for inappropriate conduct:

Reporting has to result in strong consequences if reports are founded, not transfer to another high paying job via friends and colleagues.

Things were swept under the rug on a huge issue involving a colleague, where she was harassed by another colleague. The person used [redacted] on a government PC. He was given an option to resign! This should have been taken further.

...the persons employment was not terminated and after 1.5 years of being stood down with full pay, they were allowed to resign. Her actions were totally inappropriate and I am still thinking about proceeding with legal action...

Disciplinary action within [redacted] is too soft and people get away with too much.

The perception or reality that inappropriate behaviour is rewarded or encouraged should be further explored by agencies.

Inappropriate conduct must be dealt with appropriately. How episodes are to be dealt with will depend on the nature of the conduct, its seriousness, frequency and impact. However, action must be taken to address it.

Other

A small number of participants (nine), described a physical assault or abuse:

Physical assault classified as accidental bumps.

as a victim of physical assault in this workplace I found the resulting investigation and outcome was not in line with the policies...