

THE INDEPENDENT



AN OCCASIONAL PAPER written by John McNicol B.D.; F.S.A. (SCOT.); M.I.P.R.A; J.P.

PUBLIC SERVICE SCANDAL

Torture - for whatever purpose and in whatever name - requires a torturer, an individual responsible for planning, and causing pain to another. According to Amnesty International, the governments of a least 90 countries use various methods of torture.

One does not have to use physical torture to inflict pain, mental stress is one of the commonest forms of torture in our modern world. Harassment, threats and reprisals being all part of the process. Normal, well - adjusted public servants are being subjected to such a program. The isolation of a person from others in the workplace can and does have a dehumanising effect.

Whistleblowers Anonymous has evidence of many current and former public servants who for one reason or another have become subjected to such treatment.

One public servant was sent to six psychiatrists, in some cases more than once to the same therapist. On more than one occasion he underwent a "gestapo - style" interview, discussing matters often unrelated to the purpose for which the officer believed he was being seen. There was an admission, in court, by one psychiatrist that he had files going back many years sent to him by a Government department on the officer in question. He freely admitted having copied from these documents when writing his report of the interviews.



**MONSTROUS ACTS ARE OFTEN JUST
FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE. THE
HORROR IS THAT TORTURERS ARE
PROBABLY NOT
FREAKS - JUST ORDINARY PEOPLE**

Power may come out of the barrel of a gun, but far more power comes out of personal files when it relates to people who do not know that it has been collected or cannot challenge its accuracy or use. Most invasion or breaches of personal privacy are by their very nature secret. They affect individuals in isolation - people who may well lack educational skills, the articulacy or determination to realise or find out what events have influenced their lives. Breaches of privacy often comes to light, years afterwards and in the absence of any right to know, or a regulatory body with powers of enquiry - the victims - even if they suspect something will not be able to have their suspicions allayed or substantiated.

The Public Service when they wish to either get rid of an employee or seek some form of reprisal will make use of their records. Few personal records have the same potential to damage personal integrity or privacy as those concerning health.

Medical ethics clearly state that clinical information about patients must normally be confidential to members of the medical profession directly concerned in treatment. The cornerstone of doctor - patient relationship originates in the Hippocratic oath and is reflected in the rules of the Australian Medical Association (AMA).

In discussing this with a medical practitioner, I was advised, "Records hold information only for the benefit of a patient's health. This information is confidential and should not be given to a third party. Professionally qualified people have a duty to protect this confidentiality"

The Public Service, we believe, has from time to time breached the area of confidentiality. The disclosure of personal health information without the patient's consent can only be permitted in certain "strictly defined circumstances" where the law or the public interest may prevail over the individual's right to confidentiality. The phrase "strictly defined circumstances" relates to the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime and cases involving national security.

***THERE IS CRUEL METHOD IN THE MADNESS
OF TEACHING PEOPLE TO TORTURE.
ALMOST ANYONE CAN LEARN IT.***

From the cases Whistleblowers Anonymous has investigated and where medical records have been acquired by the Public Service, it has been often found to be outside these guidelines.

We did not fear Orwell's 1984 but in the years that have followed some frightening developments have come about without most people being aware of what was happening. The threat has not come from the entrepreneurial sector, nor the private sector but from the public sector.

Public Servants are not long in the system before "big brother" has details of their personality, temperament and culture. Detail of financial matters, personal health and sexual life soon become part of the growing databank.

Whistleblowers are particularly earmarked for attention within the Public Service and with no Whistleblowers Protection legislation, they are subjected to all kinds of investigations.

Whistleblowers Anonymous has information of vehicles being used for surveillance purposes. Entry into private homes by "hired hands", investigators who are employed for such purposes. They have been known to call at homes under the pretence of looking for a particular person. They have even acquired the services of children to sit in their vehicles as a decoy of being legitimate in their enquiries.

Such acts cause stress in the life of the Whistleblower and his family. The horror is that torturers are probably not freaks - just ordinary people.

The Government sows seeds of distrust and uncertainty among many of its employees. A well placed informant can provide the Government with the details needed to defuse a court case and often the information might be false.

"Everyone has the right to respect for private and family life, his home and correspondence"

The 1948 UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

It goes without saying that any reporting system depends upon the willingness of men and women who having come across some form of corrupt practice put their personal security at risk by disclosing information. Those that dare to speak up are our nation's unsung heroes - the Whistleblowers.

We want Whistleblowers Protection legislation to safeguard against harassment, victimisation and the loss of their job.

Write to your member of State and Federal Parliament requesting that they support such legislation.

Whistleblowers Anonymous need your financial support as we plan to initiate a nationwide campaign against corruption. Send your gift, every letter will be acknowledged.

If your organisation or church would like someone to speak on Whistleblowing do write to us.

In supporting Whistleblowers Anonymous, you will be

"Putting Australia First"

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