

Thursday 2 September 2021

Morrison Government sets stage for Women's Safety Summit by gutting Respect@Work Report

Days away from the National Summit on Women's Safety, the centre piece of the Morrison Government's attempt to reduce sexual harassment and violence against women, the Government has voted in the house to ignore key recommendations of the Respect@Work report, voting down the substantive changes that would improve safety for women in workplaces.

The Morrison Government voted down amendments put forward by Labor and the Greens.

Voted down amendments include:

- An introduction of universal 10 days paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave in the National Employment Standards
- A positive duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace
- Expressly prohibited sexual harassment and introduction of a new quick and easy complaints process in the Fair Work Act
- Broadened powers of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner to investigate inquiries.

The Sex Discrimination Commissioner herself joined with the ACTU and numerous other organisations through the senate inquiry process on this bill to call on the Morrison Government to act on all recommendations of the report which was commissioned by this Government. Today is a sorely missed opportunity.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"The National Summit on Women's Safety is supposed to be the centre piece of the Morrison Government's women's safety agenda and today they have set the stage by refusing to implement key elements of their own Respect@Work report which would have delivered preventative steps against harassment and violence.

"The Respect@Work report was a key opportunity for parties to bridge political divides to protect women - instead the Morrison Government chose to shut down substantive change.

"Today was an opportunity for the Prime Minister to back up all his talk on sexual harassment and change for women. Instead, his government voted to ensure that the responsibility for ending harassment and violence still falls to individual women.

"The Morrison Government has failed to address a systemic issue which affects millions of people every year. Two in five women and one in four men have experienced and will continue to experience workplace sexual harassment.

"Before it even starts the Government's National Summit on Women's Safety is undermined by the actions taken today by the Morrison Government."

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