

Tuesday 16 February 2021

## Prime Minister continues to ignore Human Rights Commission recommendations on sexual harassment

The ACTU has today rejected the Prime Minister's internal review as an inadequate response to the sexual assault in Parliament House, and urged the Government to act on the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's report released 12 months ago.

The Sex Discrimination Commissioner handed the national report on sexual harassment in workplaces with 55 recommendations, but this report has been ignored by Government.

An ACTU survey for that report found more than half the respondents (54.8%) had experienced sexual harassment at their most recent workplace. Only 17% of those had made a formal complaint.

Sexual harassment and gendered violence is a national workplace issue, and the Prime Minister's response today has demeaned the many women and girls who have faced this issue in their workplace.

The AHRC report recommendations include:

- Stronger work health and safety laws to make sure that employers are obliged to tackle the underlying causes of sexual harassment at work;
- Better access to justice for workers through a quick, easy new complaint process in our workplace laws;
- Stronger powers for the Sex Discrimination Commissioner to investigate industries which are rife with sexual harassment, and positive duties on employers.

### Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Women should not have to rely on their Boss having a daughter in order to be safe at work.

"The Prime Minister's response today announcing an internal review lead by one of his own MPs is a flawed and inadequate response.

"There are clearly deep structural and cultural issues in this particular high risk workplace that need an independent light shone.

"But this issue is not one limited to Canberra and Parliament House. Sexual harassment at work is rife across Australia and our current laws are failing to keep workers safe.

"The Federal Government were given 55 recommendations for protecting workers against sexual harassment in all workplaces 12 months ago and instead they chose to sit on their hands and do nothing.

They have failed to act on any of the recommendations of their own report.

"With more than half of the people we surveyed experiencing sexual harassment at work we have to look at this as a systematic issue in our country – one that requires urgent reforms

“We have to strengthen work health and safety laws to make sure employers are obliged to tackle the underlying causes of sexual harassment and gendered violence.

“With only 17 per cent of people who are sexually harassed making a formal complaint the Government must look at why women feel deterred from seeking justice – no one should be afraid to stand up because of fear of job loss, ramifications for their career, or because of concern that they will not be taken seriously.”

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