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Morrison ignores critical Respect@Work reforms

The Morrison Government has again today rejected key recommendations put forward by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins, in her landmark Respect@Work report.

The Government-controlled Senate Committee into its Respect@Work Bill refused to support key recommendations that would make the greatest contribution to making work safer for women in its report released today.

The ACTU along with a wide range of organisations and the Sex Discrimination Commissioner herself, pressed the Senate Inquiry to adopt all legislative measures recommended by Respect@Work which are supported by the Greens and Labor party but ignored by the Coalition.

The Bills are due to be debated next week.

The Coalition's Respect@Work Bills are a missed opportunity that places the burden on the shoulders of individual women to enter complex and lengthy complaints processes at their own cost and risk. Central to the Respect@Work Report Recommendations was to better integrate and align the anti-discrimination, workplace and WHS systems and put in place a proactive, preventative approach to sexual harassment.

Among the recommendations the Morrison Government has failed to act on include:

- Recommendations 17, 18 and 19: Amend the Sex Discrimination Act to include a positive duty on employers to take reasonable measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and victimisation; supported by appropriate enforcement and inquiry powers
- Recommendation 28: Amend the FW Act to expressly prohibit sexual harassment and introduce a new quick and easy complaints process.

The Bill is also an opportunity to finally include at least 10 days paid of family domestic violence leave in the Fair Work Act, to support women escaping violent relationships.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Only 17 per cent of those sexually harassed at work report it, for reasons including fear of losing work and backlash from the perpetrator. It is critical that more preventative measures are taken, and the Morrison Government must amend the Sex Discrimination Act to include a positive duty on employers.

"Respect@Work is a clear and compelling plan to make women safer at work; for employers to take positive steps to stamp out harassment, and for women to get justice if they are harassed. The Morrison Government must rethink their decision today.

"Violence and harassment of women at work is a national crisis. There must be political unity and all sides of politics must come together to ensure women are safe and respected at work.

"The Morrison Government must finally listen to Australian women and abandon its opposition to family and domestic violence leave. The introduction of 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave is critical to protecting Australian women from violence and harassment, so that working women can escape an abuse relationship without fearing loss of employment and critical income."

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