

Monday 25 October 2021

## **Morrison Government attempts to shift responsibility for Respect@Work to private sector, states and territories**

Attorney-General Michaelia Cash has today tried to shift the responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the Morrison Government's Respect@Work report to states, territories and the private sector.

This comes after the Government, with the support of One Nation, voted down amendments put forward by Labor and the Greens which would have enacted key recommendations of Respect@Work, including:

- A positive duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace
- Expressly prohibiting sexual harassment and introduction of a new quick and easy complaints process in the Fair Work Act
- Broad powers for the Sex Discrimination Commissioner to investigate complaints.

The Government has also refused to take the opportunity to introduce 10 days paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave in the National Employment Standards, once again demonstrating its lack of commitment to women's safety and economic security.

The states, territories and the private sector of course have an important part to play and must step up to implement the recommendations that they are responsible for. However, the majority of the Respect@Work Recommendations involve Commonwealth government responsibilities. Not only is the Commonwealth failing to effectively coordinate the states, it has failed to implement a number of key recommendations from the Report that it is solely responsible for, including placing positive duties on employers.

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

"Just like quarantine, the vaccine rollout and climate change the Morrison Government has once again tried to outsource its responsibility for Respect@Work to the states.

"The private sector, states and territories have an important part to play in protecting women at work and implementing some of the Respect@Work recommendations, however, the majority of the recommendations are the responsibility of the Commonwealth and can only be implemented by them. The Morrison Government must not handball responsibility again.

"The Morrison Government missed critical recommendations of the Respect@Work report, including placing a positive duty on employers to take reasonable steps to preventing harassment at work, and expressly prohibiting sexual harassment.

"The Morrison Government refused to act on sexual harassment until women across the country marched in front of parliament after being inspired by young women like Brittany Higgins and Grace Tame – and even then, they only did the bare minimum. Trying to shift the blame onto the private sector, states and territories is an attempt to avoid responsibility.

"Two in five women and one in four men have experienced and will continue to experience workplace sexual harassment unless we have a federal government that takes responsibility and action to enact all of the Respect@Work report."

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