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ACTU President calls on Morrison Government to implement all 55 recommendations of Respect@Work report at National forum on Workplace Sexual Harassment

ACTU President Michele O'Neil will once again call on the Morrison Government to fully implement all 55 recommendations of the Respect@Work report at the National Forum on Workplace Sexual Harassment today, an event at which Attorney General Michaela Cash is also speaking.

The ACTU's nationwide workplace surveys found 64 per cent of women have personally experienced one or more forms of sexual harassment at some point in their working lives, while a quarter of workplace health and safety survey respondents experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months.

The Respect@Work report commissioned by and delivered to the Morrison Government was comprehensive and delivered 55 practical recommendations for reform. Of the 12 legislative changes recommended only six have become law.

If the Morrison Government is serious about addressing the systemic issue of sexual harassment in workplaces, they must immediately implement all the recommendations, including:

- Amend the Sex Discrimination Act to place a positive duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment at work
- Expressly prohibit sexual harassment and introduce a new quick and easy complaints process in the Fair Work Act
- Empower the Sex Discrimination Commissioner to initiate her own enquiries into systemic sexual harassment and sex discrimination
- Develop a WHS Code of Practice on preventing sexual harassment at work

Today Ms O'Neil will also say that if the Government really wants to act on sexual harassment they must also address gender inequality in society. Australia's gender pay gap has grown over the last year to 14.2 per cent and over 30 per cent if actual working hours are factored in.

Women are disproportionately represented in insecure work, including industries such as retail and health which women are more likely to experience gendered violence or sexual harassment.

The Morrison Government must also protect workers by introducing 10 days Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

“If the Morrison Government wants to be serious about acting on workplace sexual harassment, then they should implement key recommendations of Respect@Work report that they are currently ignoring, including expressly prohibiting sexual harassment in the Fair Work Act and a positive duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment in the Sex Discrimination Act.

“Addressing workplace sexual harassment means addressing inequality in our society. This means fixing the massive gender pay gap that is at 30 per cent if you include actual working hours – not just full-time work. Effective enforceable pay equity laws are also needed.

“64 per cent of women have experienced workplace sexual harassment, but most of them don’t make a formal complaint because of fear of repercussions or a lack of support. It is critical that the Morrison Government immediately implement all 55 recommendations and amendments of the Respect@Work report to address systematic harassment.

“Women are disproportionately represented in insecure work where sexual harassment is more prevalent – especially in retail and health. Insecure work makes it harder to speak up for fear of losing work and the Morrison Government will continue to fail women unless they address improving job security”.

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