

Tuesday 27 September 2022

Unions welcome action on Respect@Work

The ACTU welcomes the Albanese Government's Respect@Work Bill introduced into parliament today by the Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus.

The Bill seeks to amend the Sex Discrimination Act to deliver on key recommendations called for in the Respect@Work report, which the previous Government ignored for too long.

The key change is to introduce a positive duty on employers to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment at work. This recommendation is critical in driving positive change at work, instead of relying solely on victims to raise complaints. Only 17 per cent of those sexually harassed at work feel safe reporting it.

Importantly, the duty will also cover requiring employers to prevent harassment by third parties such as customers or clients of workers. This is critical for many workers, including in retail and fast food where customers are the top source of harassment according to a survey conducted by the SDA and Human Rights Commission.

The ACTU calls on the Opposition, Greens and crossbench to support this Bill.

The Albanese Government has also committed to further legislative changes to the Fair Work Act to finally deliver all Respect@Work recommendations.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

“This is such an important and long overdue legislative change as sexual harassment at work is rife in Australia with women having a 2 in 3 chance of experiencing it in a current or former workplace.

“Employers having an obligation to prevent sexual harassment is essential to making workplaces safe for everyone.

“For workers in the retail and fast-food industry, many of them teenagers, customers are the biggest perpetrators of sexual harassment. Its welcome to see the Albanese Government taking steps to hold employers accountable for also preventing this type of harassment.

“We will not have gender equality while women are having to leave jobs because they feel unsafe.

“The Morrison Government failed to act, and it's now up to the members of this parliament to use their vote, stand up for women and say enough is enough.”

Media contact: Isabella Hope Tilley 0414 894 040