



AUSTRALIAN GENDER
EQUALITY COUNCIL
working for balance

MEDIA RELEASE

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AGEC is horrified by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces Review findings and supports all 28 recommendations

Australian Gender Equality Council (AGEC) revealed its horror at the findings of Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins Review into parliamentary workplace culture and has called for the urgent implementation of every recommendation.

The review found that over half (51%) of all people currently in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces have experienced at least one incident of bullying, sexual harassment or actual or attempted sexual harassment at work.

AGEC, Australia's first independent group dedicated to gender equality, commended Commissioner Jenkins for her report, *Set the Standard*, which clearly demonstrated that the nation's Parliament does not meet the standards the community expects.

AGEC Chair Coral Ross AM, also praised former Parliamentary staffer Britany Higgins, whose allegations of sexual assault in Parliament House led to the Review.

"The boys club culture, power imbalance, gender inequality, lack of accountability and toxic environment which Commissioner Jenkins found clearly shows that Parliament is not a safe workplace," said Ms Ross. "As one person told the Review, Parliament should set the standard for workplace culture, not the floor of what culture should be."

"The high levels of sexual harassment and bullying in parliament are horrifying. It is staggering that 63% of women parliamentarians surveyed reported they had been sexually harassed, and unbelievable that women said they felt lucky if they had not been assaulted" added Ms Ross.

Set the Standard has made 28 recommendations. Some key recommendations include:

- Gender and diversity targets for MPs, staff and departments
- The establishment of an Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission
- Review the physical infrastructure to increase accessibility and inclusion
- Eliminating sexist language and behaviour in the chamber
- Codes of conduct for parliamentarians and for staff
- Develop and deliver mandatory best practice training for parliamentarians and staff, focusing on respectful workplace behaviour
- Expand the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service
- A review of the parliamentary sitting calendar with a view to enhance wellbeing
- New alcohol policies

AGEC Managing Director, Associate Professor Terrance Fitzsimmons said he was particularly pleased to see *Set the Standard* recommended targets to achieve gender balance among parliamentarians.

"The AGEC Manifesto calls for gender balanced representation in all levels of government and that political parties should set gender targets and quotas," said Associate Professor Fitzsimmons. "This year Australia dropped to 54th in Women's political empowerment. The lack of diversity contributes to the boys club culture in Parliament."

ENDS

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Member organisations of the Australian Gender Equality Council

- 1 National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC)
- 2 Australian Federation of Business & Professional Women (AFBPW)
- 3 Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA)
- 4 Australian Women Lawyers (AWL)
- 5 Financial Services Institute of Australasia (FINSIA)
- 6 Women in Super (WIS)
- 7 Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA)
- 8 Women in Digital (WID)
- 9 Women and Leadership Australia (WLA)
- 10 Transport Women Australia (TWA)
- 11 Australian Centre for Leadership for Women (ACLW)
- 12 Women in Aviation Australian Chapter (WAI)
- 13 Women in Banking and Finance (WIBF)
- 14 National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC)
- 15 National Association of Women in Operations (NAWO)
- 16 Women in Technology (WIT)
- 17 Women in Gaming & Hospitality (WGA)
- 18 Economic Security for Women (eS4W)
- 19 Older Women's Network (OWN)
- 20 Women for Election Australia (WFEA)
- 21 Engineers Australia
- 22 Tradeswomen Australia (TWA)
- 23 Women in Automotive (WinA)
- 24 Elevate Her (Lean in)
- 25 Australasian Women in Emergencies Network (AWEN)