



Public release of Motion for Respect – Report into Workplace Culture in the Tasmanian Ministerial and Parliamentary Services

In recognition of the deep history and culture of this island I acknowledge and pay my respects to all Tasmanian Aboriginal People, the past and present custodians of the Land upon which we meet.

I am pleased that today, as the Independent Reviewer, I am able to publically release: **Motion for Respect** - a Report into Workplace Culture in the Tasmanian Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (MPS).

In particular as it relates to discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying.

When a Review is commissioned nobody really knows what will be revealed. I commend the Government for taking the bold step to commission such a broad and far-reaching Review.

The Review attracted high participation. There was;

- a 56.5% response rate to the Survey into Workplace Culture (equating to 318 individuals)
- 620 substantive comments made throughout the Survey
- 26 written submissions
- 13 verbal submissions

The Review was conducted on a platform of confidentiality and anonymity. The high level of participation demonstrated a desire for change and also a trust and confidence in the Review process.

I thank all those who participated for their courage, insights and candour.

Evidence provided in the written and oral submissions was consistent, comprehensive, powerful and poignant. There is no ignoring the fact that some of the content raised in the submissions was disturbing.

People shared accounts of discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying which had caused them great distress. Submissions provided participants the opportunity, often for the first time, to share their experiences in a safe and non-judgemental space - often described as cathartic.

It is important to note that those who provided submissions, work or have worked, at all levels and areas across MPS.

Some participants engaged in the survey and/or submission process to impart their knowledge and views as to where workplace culture and structural improvements could be made.

This aligned well with the primary intent of the Review, which was to identify needs and gaps within the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services. In conducting the Review, a number of issues of concern were identified.

From the Survey, it was identified that:

- 82% of respondents expressed general dissatisfaction with complaint processes
- 40% experienced bullying
- 24% experienced discrimination
- 15% experienced sexual harassment
- Two thirds of respondents reported witnessing discrimination, sexual harassment or bullying in the workplace
 - Only 11% of those who witnessed such behaviours intervened

It is important to emphasise that while the Report identifies a workplace culture considered by many to be unacceptable or unsafe there is absolutely no suggestion that the Report is a reflection on **all** those who currently work across Ministerial and Parliamentary Services.

Other areas of concern identified include:

- an absence of, or inconsistent, workplace policies, procedures and practices;
- inadequate or unsafe complaint mechanisms;
- a lack of training and education in relation to rights, responsibilities and respectful behaviours;
- a general lack of good governance, including a lack of accountability and consequences that follow inappropriate or unlawful behaviours; and
- inconsistent practices in recruitment, employment and entitlements

It became evident that the current culture and associated workplace practices are a culmination, over many years, of siloed workplace structures, lack of oversight and accountability, the coming and going of politicians across all party lines, and the coming and goings of political staffers and other MPS employees.

Such factors can erode employee confidence, professional enjoyment and allow poor and unacceptable behaviours to flourish.

It was essential that the Report reflect the experiences and views of participants. Accordingly, their voices can be heard throughout.

The Report provides a comprehensive, honest and frank insight into MPS workplace leading to 14 Recommendations.

The Recommendations are constructive, forward-focused, and designed to build functional, effective and contemporary workplace frameworks. They provide practical and achievable pathways to change.

Moving forward it must be transparently clear, from the top down, that nobody's behaviour in the workplace is beyond scrutiny.

Support across all political lines for the Review to be undertaken in the first instance was heartening and I am now left feeling optimistic that there is a genuine and united appetite for positive change and improvements across MPS.

I would like to acknowledge how proud I am of the small but talented team who worked on the Review. I pay special mention to my colleague Melanie van Egdome for her tireless contribution throughout the process. The team's professionalism, sensitivity and pragmatic approach resulted in a Report that will, I am sure, provide a guide to others and endure the test of time.

The summary and full Report will be available on Equal Opportunity Tasmania's website. A limited number of hard copies will also be obtainable.

I now hand over to Ms White for her comments on the Report. Thank you.

Sarah Bolt, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

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