

3 June 2021

Kate Jenkins
Sex Discrimination Commissioner
Australian Human Rights Commission
Level 3, 175 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



By Email: CPWReview@humanrights.gov.au

Dear Commissioner

Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces

We write on behalf of Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance ('MEAA') members employed as journalists who are part of the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery ('Press Gallery').

MEAA recently undertook a confidential survey of Press Gallery members which found a widespread culture of sexism and male dominance that makes working at Parliament House often uncomfortable or unsafe for women journalists.

Numerous members reported experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment in Parliament House in the form of:

- staring and leering;
- comments about their own or colleagues' bodies and clothing; and
- unsolicited touching (on shoulder, hand etc).

In addition, women journalists reported, both through the survey and through feedback to MEAA more generally of a "boys' club" culture with widespread:

- "mansplaining" by male politicians and staffers to women (often on matters the women have specific expertise in);
- male politicians and staffers interrupting women or talking over the top of them when they are speaking;
- male politicians and staffers overlooking women journalists to speak only to men (even if it means, for example, speaking to male camera operators rather than a journalist);
- frustration at being given tasks on a gendered basis (i.e. women journalists being asked to report on gendered violence on every occasion);
- women journalists expected to drink alcohol when meeting with politicians; and
- a culture that if you don't accept sexist behaviour from a politician, staffer, or another journalist then your career may be ruined.

MEAA encourages members to participate in this Inquiry and trusts that the process will provide journalists and other media workers an opportunity to share their experiences of the culture within Parliament House.

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Yours sincerely,

Adam Portelli

Adam Portelli
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