

Parliament as a gendered workplace:

Towards a new code of conduct

SUBMISSION TO THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY
INTO COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY
WORKPLACES

Australian Political
Studies Association

The Global Institute for
Women's Leadership



Australian
National
University





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University

Submission to the Independent Review of Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces

Australian Political Studies Association
Global Institute for Women's Leadership

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Introduction

Serial revelations of misconduct in the Australian Parliament led the Australian Political Studies Association and the Global Institute for Women's Leadership to bring together stakeholders and academic experts in July 2021 to consider how to address bullying, intimidation, and harassment in the parliamentary workplace. The workshop – 'Parliament as a Gendered Workplace: Towards a New Code of Conduct' – was held at The Australian National University and the program is attached to this submission.

Evidence presented at the workshop confirmed that while there has been a steadily increasing presence of women in the Australian Parliament, both as parliamentarians and staffers as well as in other support roles, many experienced parliament as an unsafe workplace. The intersection of gender, race, and other forms of diversity were seen to compound such negative experience. While diversity had increased, the unwritten norms underlying the culture of parliament had yet to be addressed.

Moreover, there was a lack of confidence in standards of workplace management or in existing processes to deal with complaints. It was clear Australia had fallen behind international standards on parliament as a gender-sensitive and diversity-sensitive workplace, despite signing up to these standards, for example at assemblies of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The process adopted for this submission was for workshop participants to be able to make continuous contributions via an online bulletin board (padlet) and for these contributions to be considered in a drafting session. A drafting committee then prepared the submission, which has been endorsed by participants in the workshop listed at the end. There was unanimous agreement on the need for a code of conduct to apply to all those working in parliamentary workplaces and an independent body to oversee implementation of the code and to handle complaints, as well as mandatory workplace training.

We begin our submission with a statement from workshop participants on why a parliamentary code of conduct is important in setting standards. This is followed by a brief introduction to the model code of conduct we propose for consideration by the Review. After presenting the code, we then provide some recommendations relating to how it should be implemented. We give permission for our submission and names to be published on the Commission's website.

Why We Need a Parliamentary Code of Conduct

A healthy democracy is an enduring feature of our nation. Our Parliament should be a symbol of opportunity, integrity, and inclusivity. A place of inspiration and excellence. A safe place and a blueprint for model behaviour. It is unacceptable that women are excluded, harassed, intimidated, and bullied in parliamentary workplaces.

It is unacceptable that women are disengaging politically and losing trust in our democracy. It is unacceptable that women whose gender intersects with other aspects of their identity such as ethnicity, disability, class or sexuality are exposed to even greater risk. It is unacceptable that imbalances of power mean women are pressured into silence or quitting their dream jobs because of a lack of accountability or consequences for perpetrators of harassment, violence, and discrimination.

As diverse Australians we lend our voices to the pursuit of a better Parliament and a stronger democracy. We lend our voices to those who have felt abandoned by the structures and cultures of our political institutions; where gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, language, age, disability, religion, or economic status have been a source of exclusion for too long. We lend our support to those who have felt intimidated, unsafe, and unheard in our Parliament.

Australia was one of the first nations to begin the process of enfranchising women, but we now lag well behind international benchmarks for gender equality such as the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index with our collective failure to extend gender equality into the parliamentary workplace. It is time to repair the democratic deficit. We must make our parliamentary workplaces safe for all - for Members, Senators, political, parliamentary and service staff, journalists, visitors, guests, students, and interns.

We believe our Parliament must not merely reflect our diverse society, but lead it. We are standing up to demand change. We expect that all people in our parliamentary workplaces are treated with respect, that all those entrusted with the privilege of elected office act with professionalism and accountability, that the consequences for those who fail to do so are tangible and proportionate, and that those who do experience mistreatment do not face retribution or further trauma in reporting it.

The Adoption of Parliamentary Codes of Conduct

As Professor Sarah Childs argued in the Good Parliament report for the UK House of Commons, Parliaments play an important symbolic role in a society above and beyond their substantive roles. They should embody the principles of equality and fairness and act as a 'role-model' institution. Parliaments should not merely reflect their societies and cultures, but lead them with best practice.

Parliamentary codes of conduct such as those recently drawn up in Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand are an important first step in setting standards. They transcend established practices and unwritten norms such as Westminster traditions of 'robust parliamentary debate' and personal attacks. They make it clear that, for example, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct is inappropriate parliamentary behaviour and will not be tolerated. In the European Parliament members sign a declaration that they will comply with the code of conduct and failure to do so disqualifies an MEP from participating in official delegations.

To date, the Parliament of Australia has avoided taking responsibility for the conduct of its Members and Senators. Privileges Committees of both the House of Representatives (2011) and the Senate (2012) have respectively determined that a code of conduct was not warranted. While there is ministerial code of conduct, there is no code relating to harms experienced in the workplace that applies to all parliamentarians, parliamentary and political staff, service staff, volunteers, and visitors. Our model code of conduct borrows elements from the codes already debated and adopted in comparable parliaments, which extend beyond integrity issues.

The recent Foster Review of the Parliamentary Workplace noted that 'All parliamentarians should clearly articulate that assault, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and serious or systemic bullying and harassment are unacceptable in their workplaces, and act to support that commitment where necessary'. Foster recommended this be done through amending the Statement of Ministerial Standards and Statement of Standards for Ministerial Staff.

The Foster Review focused explicitly on the experiences of parliamentarians and those employed under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act, rather than all those who work in parliamentary workplaces, but noted the scope of the current Independent Review was broader and should cover others.

Perversely, many laws made by the parliament that hold people to account on issues of harassment and workplace safety do not apply to parliamentarians or their staff. Parliament House and other Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces – including electorate offices and anywhere parliamentary committee meetings are held – are often seen as 'exceptional' but in reality they are workplaces for thousands of people in addition to parliamentarians and Ministerial staff (who by their nature enjoy higher status and profile than many others in these

workplaces) and these people deserve to have the same rights to a safe working environment as all other Australians.

The clear consensus at the expert workshop was that rather than updating specific standards or developing arrangements that apply only to a select group that work in Parliament House, a code of conduct should be introduced to cover all those that are present in parliamentary workplaces – including visitors, non-MoP(S) staff, interns, volunteers and journalists. This approach mirrors that taken in the UK where a Behaviour Code applies to all visiting and working at Parliament.

Our model code of conduct borrows elements from the codes already debated and adopted in comparable parliaments. Such overarching codes of conduct need to be underpinned by detailed harassment, sexual harassment, and bullying policies. If codes are to be taken seriously there also needs to be sanctions for non-compliance – for example, the European model of disqualifying parliamentarians from participation in official delegations is well worth considering in the Australian context

A Code of Conduct for the Parliament of Australia

The Parliament of Australia should be a model workplace, where everybody is treated with respect and courtesy.

Whether you are a visitor or working in Parliament House or elsewhere, there are clear guidelines on how you should be treated or how you should treat others:

- Ensure Parliament meets the highest standards of integrity, courtesy and mutual respect
- Make Parliament a safe and inclusive workplace where diversity is valued
- Show that bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, are unacceptable
- Speak up about any unacceptable behaviour
- Act professionally towards others
- Participate in training on harassment prevention and office management
- Understand that unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with seriously and independently, with effective sanctions

We need to restore pride in our Parliament and repair the loss of trust that has taken place. Parliament should be a safe place where the diversity of the Australian people can be effectively represented, leading to better policy and practice. For all these reasons, a code of conduct applying to all who work in parliamentary workplaces must be a priority. Next come the processes to ensure the code is implemented.

Oversight and Complaint Handling

There is a clear need not only for a legislated code of conduct but for an independent authority such as a Parliamentary Standards Commissioner to oversee it and support harassment prevention, proper management of complaints and consequences for those who do not uphold the code.

An effective complaints process would provide a flexible, integrated pathway for dealing with workplace issues. A single process that addresses everyday as well as more serious complaints, and also records Incidents that do not proceed to a formal complaint, will ensure people have greater awareness of it and be more likely to use it in more serious cases.¹

Often the process of making a complaint leads to additional trauma and suffering and exhausts the complainant to the point where they feel unable or unwilling to continue to seek justice. Those in parliamentary workplaces face additional barriers and challenges around the political consequences of taking action and the impact on their future career opportunities beyond the Parliament. This highlights the importance of acting quickly and providing ongoing support to complainants after the investigation, to avoid further trauma or retribution.

As found by the Foster Review, it is of the utmost importance that this authority be independent of parliamentarians, political parties, and executive government. The mechanisms and processes adopted by such an authority should be evidence-based, trauma-informed, victim-focused, and underpinned by an intersectional and gendered lens. As with the United Kingdom's Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme, the complaint-handling authority should use independent experts with specialist knowledge to achieve this purpose.

The complaint-handling authority must be able to investigate both current and historical allegations. Because of its psychological impact, there is often significant time between alleged sexual abuse and the reporting of it. In not providing the necessary powers to investigate historical complaints, the potential for perpetuating injustices is heightened. In the United Kingdom, the power to investigate historic cases has also recognised that this may be an important way to influence current behaviour and employment practice.²

When investigating current allegations of sexual misconduct, harassment, or assault, a uniform system should be consistent in application but also considerate of the specificities of the variety of workspaces to which it will apply (such as the parliamentary precinct versus

¹ See Kieran Pender, *Us Too? Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession*, London: International Bar Association, 2019, pp. 106–07.

² In her report on bullying and harassment of MPs' parliamentary staff in the UK House of Commons, Gemma White QC found that despite the introduction of an independent complaints and grievance scheme, staffers still believed that making a complaint would be career suicide. She concluded that former staffers would be more likely to take advantage of it and this could influence MPs' behaviour and benefit current staff. Access to the scheme for historic cases was duly extended in 2019.

electorate offices). When determining outcomes of investigations, the independent authority must have the power to recommend appropriate sanctions for serious breaches of the code of conduct.

Transparency

The need for transparency in documenting the reporting, and related outcomes, of complaints is paramount not only for cultural change in the workplace, but also for the restoration of both individual and public faith in parliamentary spheres. Annual reporting should therefore indicate both the types of complaints raised, the processes of resolution, and additional data which indicates the satisfaction with procedure and outcome. Such reporting is in line with recommendations from the Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces (2018).

As research has demonstrated that gender imbalance and inequality are central to the perpetuation of unsafe workplaces for women, additional data collection on MoP(S) staff, which indicates the gender and diversity of peoples holding positions of seniority, must also be published. This will be a significant contribution to transparency in government, as well as reform of parliamentary workplaces.

Accompanying annual reporting on complaints of sexual assault, sexual harassment and bullying, there should be regular surveys which seek to capture workplace experience. When compared to complaint data, such surveys may document incidents that have not been reported due to fear of retribution such as loss of employment. They may also capture the voices and sentiments of bystanders. Regular surveys also serve to capture a baseline of overall employee satisfaction and security within their working environment which can then be matched with data on complaints, revealing the level of confidence in complaint handling and effectiveness of the systems that have been implemented.

Responsibility

The Parliament of Australia must also take responsibility for the workplace culture within its workplaces. The Presiding Officers should mandate a whole-of-parliament review that considers gender equality in parliamentary leadership, infrastructure, culture, and legislative and oversight processes, using toolkits produced by international bodies such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the OECD. Recommendations from such reviews should feed into mainstream reforms of standing orders, human resource policies, as well as corporate and strategic plans.

The Parliament of Australia, like others, should make a public commitment to gender equality through a Gender Equality Action Plan, and devote personnel and resources to its implementation.

Training

Putting new institutional and structural settings in place to hold those working in Parliament to account for their behaviour must be accompanied by training – both on preventing harassment and bullying and the implementation of the code, but also on office management and workplace roles and responsibilities.

Anti-harassment training has been implemented in the Canadian House of Commons as part of a longstanding process seeking to prevent and address harassment, with more recent amendments making this training mandatory for staff and MPs. While Canada's early action in this area is to be applauded, the experience has shown that the type of training provided is crucial to its success. Issues around whether training is provided online or in-person, and the relevance of the scenarios to gender-based harassment can seriously reduce its effectiveness. The importance of involving gender-based violence experts in both policy creation and in training is a key lesson for jurisdictions like Australia when introducing similar policies.

In addition to mandating anti-harassment training and ensuring all those working in parliament understand their obligations and responsibilities under the code of conduct, proper induction and training on broader workplace roles and responsibilities are also required. While most workplaces require staff to undertake compulsory training and induction processes, the complex and unclear arrangements for both employing parliamentarians and their staff make these even more important in parliamentary settings.

It is only when people clearly understand their responsibilities and their rights that the workplace culture and its safety will improve.

Conclusion

Our submission has been prepared through a participatory process, drawing on the experience of many current and former politicians and political staffers as well as the experience of overseas parliaments in addressing issues of workplace harassment, sexual harassment, and bullying.

We believe that the time has well and truly arrived for the Australian Parliament to overcome its previous reluctance concerning a binding code of conduct covering all those in parliamentary workplaces. We need to catch up with international standards and ensure our parliamentary workplaces become models of fair and accountable employment practices and worthy of community trust.

Endorsements

The above submission is endorsed by:

Dr Kerryn Baker, The Australian National University

Natalie Barr, Global Institute for Women's Leadership, The Australian National University

Frances Crimmins, CEO, on behalf of the YWCA Canberra

Marnie Cruickshank, PhD Candidate, Griffith University

Caitlin Figueiredo, CEO on behalf of Jasiri Australia

Fiona Gill, Student, The Australian National University

Professor Susan Harris Rimmer, Policy Innovation Hub, Griffith University

Dr Fiona Jenkins on behalf of the ANU Gender Institute

Emerita Professor Carol Johnson, FASSA, University of Adelaide

Dr Maria Maley, School of Politics and International Relations, The Australian National University

Marianna O'Gorman, Elizabeth Reid Network

Dr Sonia Palmieri, The Australian National University

Professor Tracey Raney, Ryerson University

Professor Elizabeth Reid AO, FASSA, FAIIA, The Australian National University

Professor Michelle Ryan, Global Institute for Women's Leadership, The Australian National University

Emeritus Professor Marian Sawyer AO, FASSA, The Australian National University

Carol Schwartz AO, Chair of Women's Leadership Institute Australia and founder of Pathways to Politics Program for Women

Michelle Staff, Global Institute for Women's Leadership, The Australian National University

Caterina Sullivan, on behalf of Strategic Sustainability Consultants

Professor Helen Sullivan, President of the Australian Political Studies Association

Dr Blair Williams, Global Institute for Women's Leadership, The Australian National University



Australian
National
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**THE GLOBAL
INSTITUTE
FOR WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP**



Australian
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Parliament as a gendered workplace: Towards a new code of conduct

15 & 16 July 2021

Australian Political
Studies Association

The Global Institute for
Women's Leadership



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The Global Institute for Women's Leadership

The Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL) aims to help create a world in which being a woman is not a barrier to women attaining leadership positions, nor a factor in how they are treated as leaders. Chaired and founded by the Hon Julia Gillard AC, GIWL seeks to bring together research, advocacy, and engagement with practice. Ensuring Australia's Parliament House is a safe place for women to work is an essential foundation for increasing the number of female political leaders in this country.

As the Director of GIWL ANU I am thrilled to support this important event which brings together robust research with lived experiences, and which will form the basis of continued advocacy for real change and reform in Australia's political system.

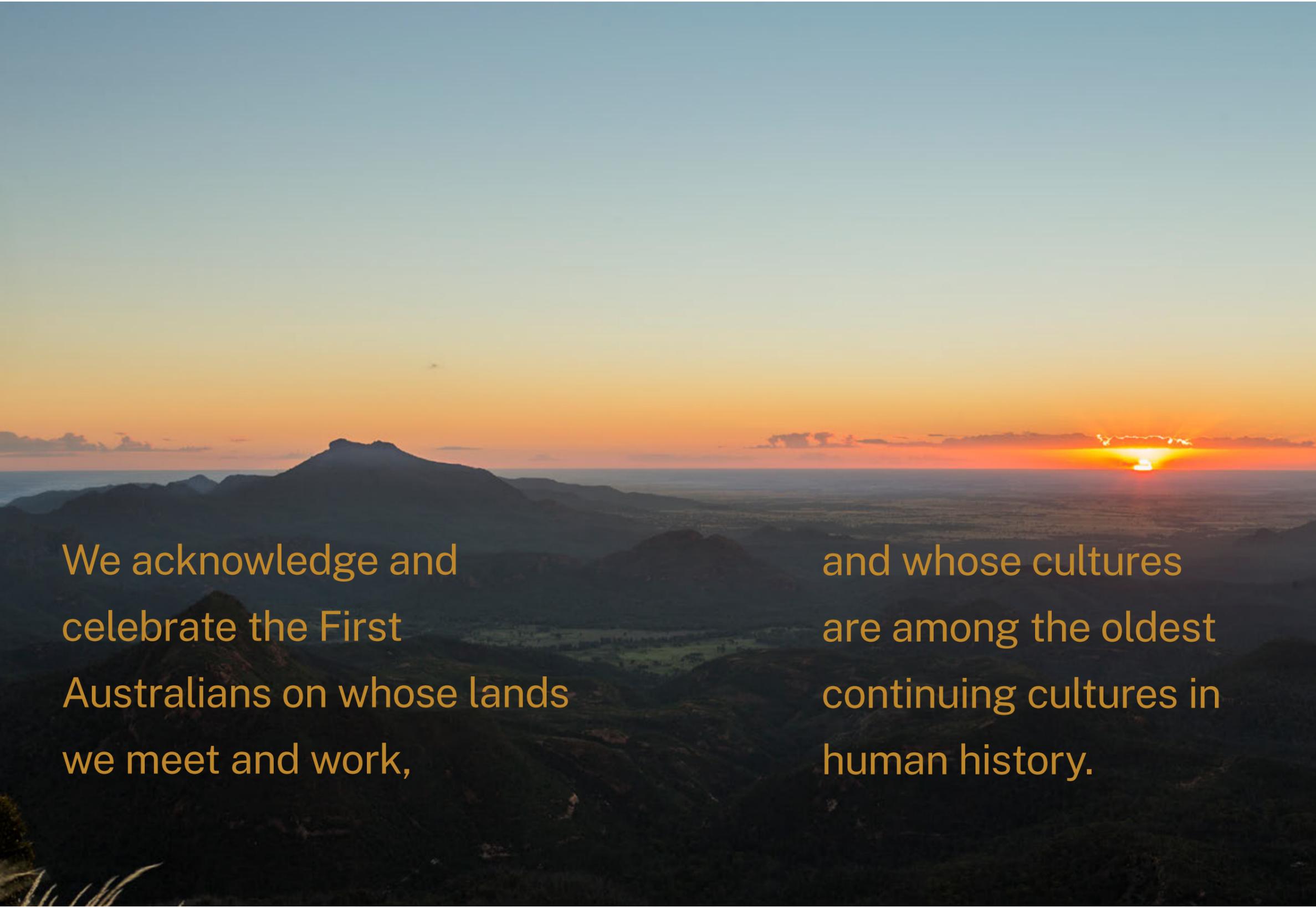
Professor Michelle Ryan
Director, GIWL ANU

Australian Political Studies Association

The Australian Political Studies Association (APSA) is the professional association for those teaching and researching in Politics and International Relations in Australia and is dedicated to promoting and facilitating work in the discipline. As part of its activities, APSA sponsors workshops of academics and practitioners who meet to consider and debate major issues of our time and how we might best respond to them. Recent examples have included workshops on Australian Indigenous-settler relationships and the challenges of climate change.

This workshop 'Parliament as a gendered workplace' extends that tradition of APSA workshops addressing critical public issues. It is particularly timely, given recent events not only in the Australian national, state, and territory parliaments but in parliaments across the world. This workshop also extends APSA's history of support for gender research through workshop grants, with past examples including workshops on the advancement of women in political science (2011), gender innovation in political science (2016), and on gendered leadership cultures (2019).

Professor Rodney Smith
Immediate Past-President
Australian Political Studies Association



We acknowledge and
celebrate the First
Australians on whose lands
we meet and work,

and whose cultures
are among the oldest
continuing cultures in
human history.

Welcome



From left to right: Natalie Barr, Blair Williams, Marian Sawyer

We are delighted to welcome participants to chilly Canberra/Ngannawal-Ngambri country for our workshop on Parliament as a Gendered Workplace. This year has seen unprecedented revelations of gendered harms being experienced by those working in the Parliament of Australia. The workshop brings together key stakeholders and academic experts who will warm up with an exciting exchange of knowledge followed by deliberation on pathways forward. It will be a very important event in developing policy positions around parliamentary reform.

It has been made possible by funding from the Australian Political Studies Association and the Global Institute for Women's Leadership, and administrative support from the School of Politics and International Relations, ANU.

The workshop will identify the obstacles to reform posed by the unique nature of the parliamentary workplace and learn how other parliaments are seeking to overcome these obstacles. In particular we shall find out what the Canadian, Catalanian, New Zealand, Swedish, and UK parliaments have done and what are the pitfalls to avoid. We have brought together a wonderful mix of lived experience, scholarly expertise, and strategic thinking and the timing is right for us to achieve policy impact. Our aim is to contribute to making parliament a gender-equal and safer place where all can perform at their best, whether politicians or staffers.

Context for this workshop

Revelations of sexual harassment, misogyny, bullying, and even criminal behaviour between and among parliamentarians and political staff have rocked Australia over recent months, revealing the power imbalances and unregulated behaviour that abound in Australian political offices. Allegations of misconduct and sexual assault have been widely covered in the media and have sparked mass protests, with people across the nation calling for change.

While Australian parliaments were early adopters of some practices to make parliament a more gender-equal workplace, in other areas they lag behind the rest of the world. Several State parliaments have taken steps to address sexual harassment, yet the federal parliament has so far failed to implement real reform in this area. *The Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* does not provide adequate processes for preventing misconduct and handling complaints when it does occur. Moreover, issues such as party loyalty and the highly asymmetrical nature of politicians' relationship to their staff contribute to the problematic nature of the parliamentary workplace.

This is an issue that disproportionately affects women. According to a 2018 survey conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission, 39% of women and 26% of men who had been in the workforce in the preceding five years had experienced workplace sexual harassment. Just last year, Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins called for urgent reform in her *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report*. Australian parliaments are not immune to the gender issues plaguing

workplaces more generally across the country and have even fewer remedies.

As a first step, a parliamentary code of conduct addressing these issues is needed – to set out the standards applying to parliament as a workplace. Such policies have been initiated in other Westminster parliaments. The Canadian Parliament adopted a harassment policy for staff in 2014, which was updated in January 2021. It includes mandatory training on harassment and violence prevention for all new MPs and staff, to be repeated every three years. In 2015 the Canadian House of Commons also adopted a separate code dealing with sexual harassment between members, said to be the first of its kind. In the United Kingdom, independent inquiries were conducted in the wake of the 'Pestminster' scandal of 2017. Policies have been promulgated on bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct, and an independent complaints and grievance scheme has been established. In New Zealand, following an independent inquiry into bullying and harassment of staffers commissioned by the Speaker, a new code of conduct has been signed by all parties.

Such efforts show what might be done in Australia to mitigate the risk of bullying, sexual harassment, and misconduct in Australian political offices. They also show the limitations of such moves and highlight what must be avoided. Making parliament a safe place for both politicians and staff is essential to creating a gender-equal parliament where none are subjected to gendered harms and all can perform at their best.

Day one : Thursday 15 July, 2021

9:00am

Welcome to Country
Introductions and aims of the workshop
Matilda House Marian Sawyer

9:15am

Opening address
The Hon. Kate Ellis

9:45am

The impact of gendered norms and practices
within parliamentary and judicial institutions

Chair: Jane Alver Susan Harris Rimmer
 Elizabeth Lee MLA Kim Rubenstein
 Kieran Pender Caitlin Figueiredo

11:15am

Morning Tea

11:30am

The impact of broader patterns of sexism and
racism in the media and political discourse

Chair: Sonia Palmieri Marnie Cruickshank
 Andrea Carson Joanna Richards
 Carol Johnson & Pia Rowe
 Blair Williams

1:00pm

Lunch

2:00pm

Resistance to change and what needs to be
done

Chair: Carol Schwartz Helen Haines MP
 Senator Larissa Waters Anne Aly MP
 The Hon. Sharman Stone Marianna O'Gorman

4:00pm

Afternoon Tea

4:30pm

6:30pm end time

New international approaches to parliament
as a workplace

Chair: Helen Sullivan Tània Verge
 Sarah Childs & Cheryl Collier &
 Sonia Palmieri Tracey Raney
 Kerryn Baker
 Josefina Erikson &
 Cecilia Josefsson

Day two : Friday 16 July, 2021

9:00am

Bringing parliament into line with
workplace norms

Chair: Marian Sawyer Melissa Donnelly
 Chris Wallace
 Maria Maley

10:30am

Conclusion of live-streamed & public event
Morning Tea

10:45am

12:30pm workshop close

Towards a new code of conduct; draft
submission for independent review

Facilitator: Sonia Palmieri

Chairs



Jane Alver is a lawyer, writer, academic, activist, and gender advisor and is currently the Director of Engagement and Effectiveness at the Australian Council for International Development. She holds degrees in Politics, Gender, and Law and her nearly complete PhD is on Pacific feminist civil society alliances. She has published on democratic innovation, young women's leadership, breaking down the gender binary, and gender and politics.



Carol Schwartz is one of Australia's most dynamic business and community leaders with a diverse career across property, the arts, finance, investment, entrepreneurship, government, and health. Carol's current board roles include the Reserve Bank of Australia, Trawalla Group, and Chair of EQT Holdings Limited. Throughout her career Carol has been a passionate advocate for gender equality and women in leadership and, as Chair of the Trawalla Foundation and the Women's Leadership Institute Australia, she has catalysed a range of initiatives to grow the critical mass of women in politics, business, and the media.



Sonia Palmieri is a Gender Policy Fellow with the Department of Pacific Affairs at The Australian National University. As an academic practitioner, she has worked in both the university sector and development and parliamentary organisations to support women's political leadership and participation. Sonia has driven the international research agenda on gender sensitive parliaments and has engaged with current and aspiring women in politics in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and – most prominently – the Pacific.



Helen Sullivan is a public policy scholar whose work explores the nature of state-society relationships and their interaction with public policy systems. She is President of the Australian Political Studies Association (2020-21), a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and National Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration Australia. Helen is the incoming Dean of the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific.



Marian Sawer AO is an Emeritus Professor and ANU Public Policy Fellow in The School of Politics and International Relations, The Australian National University. She was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for her services to women and to political science and is a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. She is the lead editor of the forthcoming Edward Elgar *Handbook of Feminist Governance*.

Speakers

Centring intersectionality: Gender and race in Australian politics

Anne Aly MP

Abstract

Any conversation around gender and women also needs to take into consideration the broader themes of intersectionality. We cannot fully understand parliament as a gendered workplace without considering the full context and ongoing legacy of racism and misogyny as intertwined. Parliament can be a frustratingly slow-moving institution, and while over the generations many great strides have been made, there continues to be much work to do to bring it into line with broader culture and standards. Recent events have highlighted the ongoing cultural issues within parliament house. Moreover, women of colour in parliamentary work face a double burden of doubt and misunderstanding. In her presentation, Dr Aly will speak about her personal experiences and observations as a woman of colour serving in the federal parliament.



Anne Aly MP was elected as the federal Member for Cowan in 2016 and re-elected in 2019. Prior to this she obtained her PhD from Edith Cowan University and held a number of senior positions within the Western Australian Public Service before becoming a professor at Curtin University and Edith Cowan University, where she led world-renowned research into counter terrorism and countering violent extremism. Anne is the Founding Chair of People against Violent Extremism (PaVE), Deputy Chair of Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Law Enforcement, and a member of the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence and Security and the Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System.

'Melodrama, fisticuffs and generally aberrant behaviour': Tracing change in policy and practice in the New Zealand Parliament

Kerryn Baker

Abstract

In 2018, following a series of public reports alleging bullying by politicians, a review of the workplace culture of the New Zealand Parliament was commissioned. The Francis Review, released in May 2019, uncovered serious issues including systemic bullying and harassment. In the wake of the review and its 85 recommendations, a voluntary code of conduct for members of parliament, staff, and visitors was introduced in July 2020; negotiations around an Independent Commission for Parliamentary Conduct are still ongoing. Yet these recent developments must be situated in the context of a broader, long-running debate on standards of parliamentary behaviour and, particularly since the advent of the mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system in the 1990s, what an inclusive and representative House should look (and act) like. This paper uses the methodology of 'practice tracing' to map how (gendered) norms of parliamentary behaviour have been established and challenged in the MMP era.



Kerryn Baker is a Fellow in the Department of Pacific Affairs at The Australian National University. Her research on gender, politics, and participation has been published in leading journals including the *Australian Journal of Political Science*, *Pacific Affairs*, *Government and Opposition*, and *Parliamentary Affairs*. Her book *Pacific Women in Politics: Gender Quota Campaigns in the Pacific Islands* was published by the University of Hawai'i Press in 2019 and she is the co-editor (with Marian Sawer) of *Gender Innovation in Political Science: New Norms, New Knowledge* (Palgrave, 2019).

The missing cohort: Understanding the gender gap in local government

Andrea Carson (with Leah Ruppanner and Gosia Mikolajcek)

Abstract

Australia historically lags behind other democracies on its record of gender participation across its three tiers of government. In recent years, some local governments have outperformed federal and state tiers with Victorian councils reaching a record 43.8 per cent of women elected in 2020, placing it among the top 15 per cent of countries in the world. This paper examines local government as a workplace with a focus on the gender gap. This ARC-funded project combines official figures with Victorian candidate and councillor survey data (fielded before and after the 2020 elections) and qualitative interviews to investigate factors that hinder closing the political gender divide. The results reveal a positive story about women's electability – despite fewer women running for office their success rate is higher than men. However, the data also shows a missing cohort of younger women. Paid full-time work, childrearing, and household responsibilities are key barriers to elected office for younger women compared to men. These findings affirm international studies that show younger women are less well represented in local government than male counterparts or older women outside their reproductive years. This study makes recommendations to narrow the gender gap to enable the Victorian Government to achieve its target of gender parity in local government by 2025.



Andrea Carson is a political scientist and an Associate Professor (Journalism) in the Department of Politics, Media and Philosophy at La Trobe University, Melbourne. Her research focuses on political communications and gender representation in politics. Her current research project, 'Women in Local Government: Understanding their Political Trajectories', is funded by ARC grant LP19010118.

The new norm(al): Realising gender sensitive parliaments

Sarah Childs and Sonia Palmieri

Abstract

As an emergent international norm, the concept of gender sensitive parliaments (GSP) is increasingly understood as the benchmark for parliamentary composition (gender equal), infrastructure (gender accessible), outputs (gender mainstreamed), and culture (gender empowered). Having compared the multiple handbooks and toolkits produced over the last 20 years, we conceptualise GSP as inclusive, with men and women sharing genuine power within institutions and with their core business and systems oriented towards the goal of gender equality. In this paper we reconsider theoretical debates over the conditions conducive to GSP reform and explore how feminist parliamentary actors have sought to exploit recent external and internal 'shocks' – Covid-19 and sexual harassment scandals respectively.



Sarah Childs is Professor of Politics & Gender at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her latest book *Feminist Democratic Representation* (with Karen Celis) has just been published by Oxford University Press. Sarah is also the author of *The Good Parliament Report* (2016), which followed a secondment to the House of Commons, and is writing a new book: *Building Feminist Institutions*.



Sonia Palmieri is a Gender Policy Fellow with the Department of Pacific Affairs at The Australian National University. As an academic practitioner, she has worked in both the university sector and development and parliamentary organisations to support women's political leadership and participation. Sonia has driven the international research agenda on gender sensitive parliaments and has engaged with current and aspiring women in politics in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and – most prominently – the Pacific.

Addressing sexual harassment in Canada's House of Commons: Early action with continuing shortfalls

Cheryl N. Collier and Tracey Raney

Abstract

Canada was an early adopter of harassment/sexual harassment protections for staff and elected officials in the House of Commons between 2014 and 2015. Yet its policy covering staff and its MP-to-MP code of conduct on sexual harassment contain serious gendered limitations that fail to adequately address the problem. Subsequent revisions made to Canada's anti-harassment rules in 2021 offer a few improvements but continue to fall short in ensuring a safe legislative workspace for all. Our presentation will highlight these shortcomings and lessons that could and should be learned for other countries interested in properly addressing the longstanding and pervasive problem of sexual harassment in legislatures and violence against women in politics more broadly.



Cheryl N. Collier is an Associate Dean in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (Acting) and Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Windsor. Her research on comparative women's movements, Canadian federal and provincial childcare and anti-violence against women policy, federalism, and violence against women in politics has been published in various journals including the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *Politics and Gender*, *Social Politics*, and *Parliamentary Affairs*. She is co-editor (with Jill Vickers and Joan Grace) of *Gender, Diversity and Federalism* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020).



Tracey Raney is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University in Toronto. She has written on sexual harassment in Canadian politics and on women's representation in Canadian politics, including publications in *Parliamentary Affairs* and the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. In 2013, she won the Jill Vickers award for the best paper presented on women and gender at the Canadian Political Science Association annual conference.

Theorising fleshy citizenship: Breastfeeding politicians in the Australian media

Marnie Cruickshank

Abstract

This paper takes up the conference theme of parliament as a gendered workplace through an examination of media texts covering two instances in which Australian politicians breastfed in parliament. The findings include framing which re-inscribes the parliament as a masculine space, where the breastfeeding body is positioned as leaky and messy, tainting the seriousness and gravity of the political sphere; the framing of motherhood and political life as incongruent, which reinforces pervasive binaries such as public/masculine — private/feminine; and finally, trivialising and sexualising discourses about the breastfeeding women which worked to constrain maternal subjectivities and knowledges within legislative space. In summary, the paper illustrates how the dominance of gendered reporting practices frame women's bodies as out of place, or 'space invaders', within parliamentary spheres and the implications of this for legislative agendas.



Marnie Cruickshank completed her Bachelor of Communication (Honours) from Brisbane's Griffith University in 2018 and graduated with a Class I. Marnie commenced her PhD in 2019 and is exploring millennial women's relationship with money management, the ways in which young women are invited to take up feminised financial subjectivities, and its implications for gender equality. Completion of her PhD will be in late 2022, with current publications appearing in *Feminist Media Studies* and *Australian Geographer*.

A workplace health and safety issue: Industrial solutions to sexual harassment and gendered violence

Melissa Donnelly

Abstract

There has been much commentary about the sexist treatment of women in elected positions, however it is only more recently that the safety of the women who work in parliamentary offices has come to public concern. Workers across parliament house and Members of Parliament staff are represented by the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), who have for many years advocated for worker-led industrial solutions to sexual harassment and gendered violence. CPSU National Secretary Melissa Donnelly will speak to the work led by union members in parliamentary workplaces to ensure safety at work. Melissa will address why sexual harassment and gendered violence is a workplace health and safety issue that can be prevented and addressed through industrial solutions.



Melissa Donnelly is the Community and Public Sector Union's (CPSU) youngest ever national secretary, as well as the third woman and the first working mother to hold the role. Melissa was admitted to practice law in New South Wales in 2006, and soon after joining the CPSU represented APS staff and argued for their right to participate in the Your Rights At Work campaign. Melissa has led the CPSU's national Political, Industrial, Research and Legal team and its Justice, Revenue and Media team and, more recently, was responsible for the union's biggest stronghold in the Australian Public Service, Services Australia.

Sex, Lies, and Question Time

The Hon. Kate Ellis

Abstract

Women in politics face gendered abuse on the floor of the parliament, sexist treatment in the media, and discrimination in the way they are regarded, often within their own parties. Drawing on her book *Sex, Lies and Question Time: Why the successes and struggles of women in Australia's parliament matter to us all*, in this presentation Kate Ellis will delve into these issues to provide an overview of parliament as a gendered workplace. She will outline how a culture of disrespect for women manifests itself in politics and what the consequences of this are. This presentation will draw upon the lived experiences of numerous women who have served in Australia's House of Representatives and Senate from various political backgrounds. Importantly, it will also cover options available for reform as we create a road map towards a better, fairer, and more representative democracy.



The Hon. Kate Ellis represented Adelaide in the Australian House of Representatives for Labor from 2004 until 2019. She served in multiple portfolios in the outer ministry of the 2007–13 federal Labor Government and was in Shadow Cabinet until she left parliament at the 2019 federal election. She is a passionate supporter of the Adelaide Crows and the mother of two young boys.

Gender equality in the Swedish Parliament: Advancements and challenges

Josefina Erikson and Cecilia Josefsson

Abstract

From a gendered workplace perspective, it is important to account for formal aspects of gender equality as well as informal ones. The Swedish Parliament has worked systematically to improve internal gender equality over the past decades and is often seen as an international champion for gender equality. The work has resulted in several improvements such as a day care center for MPs' children, fixed sitting hours in the chamber, and gender equality action plans for each term. Yet, turning to informal aspects of the parliament's inner workings, our research shows remaining problems. Women MPs are more exposed to negative treatment, experience higher pressure, and are more anxious about committing mistakes, indicating a remaining masculine-coded politician norm. These findings warrant further work that targets the informal aspects of parliament's inner work such as gendered norms and practices.



Josefina Erikson is Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Government, Uppsala University. Her research interests include gender and parliaments, feminist institutionalism, and prostitution policy. She is currently exploring the gendered dimensions of the inner life of the Swedish Parliament through a multimethod approach together with Cecilia Josefsson.



Cecilia Josefsson is a Researcher in the Department of Government at Uppsala University. She studies gender and politics from a comparative perspective and has written about electoral gender quotas, political representation, candidate selection, and political parties from a gendered perspective in a wide variety of contexts. Together with Josefina Erikson she currently explores the gendered dimensions of the Swedish Parliament.

Building pathways into politics for young women

Caitlin Figueiredo

Abstract

The Brittany Higgins revelations highlighted the structural inequalities facing women in parliament. For years, young women have wanted to run for office and win, but are often reluctant because of the toxic nature of politics and the media scrutiny they will face. Unless we tackle gendered norms and practices within parliamentary institutions, then our democracy will never represent all Australians. Jasiri Australia, a youth-led organisation on a mission to unlock pathways into politics, has worked with over 500 young women and every major political party on the local and national level to unlock direct pathways into politics. Caitlin Figueiredo will share insights into Jasiri's process and share data, stories, and insights from alumni that will provide attendees with a roadmap to support the next generation of policymakers and political disruptors.



Caitlin Figueiredo, founder and CEO of Jasiri Australia, is an award-winning international and gender equality advocate who creates pathways into politics for young women across the Asia-Pacific. Caitlin has worked with the United Nations and frequently consults with federal ministers, government departments, and NGOs across Australia and abroad. Caitlin represents 4.5 million young Australians as the Co-Chair of the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, is a Queens Young Leader and Forbes 30 Under 30 Listee, and remains the youngest category winner of the Australian 100 Women of Influence.

Stockholm syndrome, parliament, and the patriarchal bargain

Helen Haines MP

Abstract

Since Federation in 1901 only 133 women have been elected to the House of Representatives. This does not even fill all 151 seats in the chamber. The culture of the federal parliament is widely recognised as 'blokey'. Yet, despite conditions considered intolerable in other workplaces, women MPs and staffers mostly remain loyal to the party of the office they serve. Even in the offices led by female MPs and ministers, women staffers report feeling powerless and marginalised. Using Deniz Kandiyoti's theory of the 'patriarchal bargain', this presentation will explore what women in the federal parliament accept in order to survive and get ahead. Finally, some workplace structural changes which could be applied to the federal parliament will be suggested in order to breakdown patriarchal transactions.



Helen Haines MP made history in May 2019 by becoming the first Independent federal parliamentarian to succeed another in the same electorate since Federation in 1901. With a doctoral degree in medical science and background in epidemiology, public health, and rural health, Helen is a nurse, midwife, teacher, and academic. She has championed the campaign for a robust federal integrity commission, working with MPs from across Parliament to draft and build support for her Australian Federal Integrity Commission Bill.

What are the Australian pathways to a Good Parliament? The imperative to deal with historical injustice for former employees

Susan Harris Rimmer

Abstract

The reforms necessary to transform Australian parliaments into safe workplaces involve a series of legal and culture reforms but must also be predicated on a genuine attempt to deal with historical injustices experienced by past employees. The Commonwealth Parliament is dealing with a series of serious allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse that raise issues of process and substance that have clearly allowed violations of rights to occur in the past. This paper will apply new research on gender-responsive transitional justice practices. It will critically reflect on the manner in which parliaments in other jurisdictions have dealt with allegations from past employees, in particular New Zealand, Canada, and the United Kingdom. This paper will also assess lessons that can be drawn from recent Australian practice in relevant spheres, including the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the DLA Review of allegations of sexual and other abuse in Defence.



Susan Harris Rimmer is a Professor and Director of the Griffith University Policy Innovation Hub (appointed July 2020) and a non-resident Research Associate at Chatham House in the UK. Susan is the co-editor of the *Research Handbook for Feminist Engagement with International Law* (Edward Elgar, 2019, with Kate Ogg) and the author of *Gender and Transitional Justice: The Women of Timor Leste* (Routledge, 2010) and over 40 refereed academic works. With Professor Sara Davies, Susan is co-convenor of the Griffith Gender Equality Research Network (<https://www.griffith.edu.au/research/gender-equality-research-network>).

Still lacking her rights at work: The treatment of women politicians in the Australian Parliament and news media

Carol Johnson and Blair Williams

Abstract

In August 2012 Anne Summers gave the Human Rights and Social Justice Lecture at the University of Newcastle. Entitled 'Her Rights at Work', Summers' speech examined the 'sexist and discriminatory treatment of Australia's first female prime minister', Julia Gillard, by both the Opposition as well as a section of the broader public. This paper will argue that parliament is still all too often a sexist and discriminatory place of work for women politicians and that parliamentary sexism and discrimination is often exacerbated by the news media's coverage of incidents. While providing a broader background, the paper will focus on several key case studies of parliamentary events and subsequent media coverage, including: Julia Gillard's October 2012 'Misogyny speech'; Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young's 'slut-shaming' during a parliamentary debate in July 2018; and former Liberal MP Julia Banks' criticism of sexism in the Liberal Party and parliament.



Carol Johnson is an Emerita Professor of Politics at the University of Adelaide. She has written extensively on issues of gender in Australian and comparative politics, including recent (2020) publications (with Blair Williams) on 'Gender and Political Leadership in a time of COVID' in *Politics & Gender* and on 'Gender, Emotion and Political Discourse' in O. Feldman (ed) *The Rhetoric of Political Leadership*. Her most recent book, *Social Democracy and the Crisis of Equality: Australian Social Democracy in a Changing World* (Springer, 2019), also incorporates a gender perspective.



Blair Williams is a Research Fellow and Lecturer with the Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL) at The Australian National University. Her research focuses on the gendered mediation of women in politics, particularly political leaders, to examine the role that the media play in the upholding of gender norms. She has published in *Feminist Media Studies*, *Parliamentary Affairs*, *Politics & Gender* and the *Australian Journal of Political Science* and has multiple entries in the *International Encyclopaedia of Gender, Media, and Communication* (2020).

Women in leadership, discrimination, and the challenges of speaking out

Elizabeth Lee MLA

Abstract

Elizabeth will speak on her experience as a parliamentarian, now leading a female majority party room and the first all-women leadership team in the ACT Legislative Assembly. Elizabeth will discuss the challenges of speaking out against injustices, biases, stereotypes, and discrimination as a woman from the culturally and linguistically diverse community; the importance of women in leadership positions telling their stories so others know they are not alone; and the importance of reducing stigma surrounding issues such as sexual assault and harassment, especially where the stigma is culturally driven. She has a record of speaking out against racism and sexism, having experienced both while growing up and throughout her career as a lawyer and parliamentarian. Elizabeth wants to be a good role model and set an example for Australians from diverse backgrounds – especially young women – to inspire them to believe they have a positive contribution to make to Australian public life.



Elizabeth Lee MLA is the ACT Liberal Leader and Member for Kurrajong in the ACT Legislative Assembly. Prior to entering the ACT Legislative Assembly, Elizabeth was a successful lawyer and lecturer at The Australian National University and the University of Canberra. Since her election to the Assembly in 2016, Elizabeth has been a leading voice for improving local schools, protecting our environment, better support for Canberrans living with a disability, and Canberrans from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

Problematic working conditions for political staffers: What can be done

Maria Maley

Abstract

In Australia thousands of political staffers work for federal Ministers in Parliament House and for MPs and Senators in electorate offices. They are also found in equivalent positions in all State parliaments. Many are women. Their employment is precarious and when they experience bullying and sexual misconduct, few make formal complaints. This paper looks at the deeper causes of their problematic working conditions, which are both structural and cultural, based on formal rules and informal norms. These include the form of their employment, poor regulation of the conduct of political actors, fundamental power imbalances, secrecy, the strange nature of their careers, and lack of training and support. There are a number of possible solutions, which range from addressing the symptoms to tackling deep underlying issues. None of these are straightforward and all face the problem of tackling vested interests.



Maria Maley is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Politics and International Relations at The Australian National University. She has been researching ministerial staff in Australia and internationally for over ten years and is a member of an international consortium of researchers comparing the roles, careers, and relationships of political staff in different countries. She teaches public administration and public policy.

Upturn: Shifting from a complaint-based to a proactive response to sexual harassment and gendered discrimination

Marianna O’Gorman

Abstract

There are a lot of reactive changes that can be made to remove barriers to staff reporting sexual harassment and improve the process and outcomes for victims. However, there are also proactive and structural changes that can be made to prevent incidents of sexual harassment and gendered discrimination happening in the first place. This conversation will focus on those preventative measures. It will canvas five proactive measures and why women working in parliament think they will contribute to positive cultural change.



Marianna O’Gorman is a director, researcher, and advocate, with a passion for gender equality and women in leadership. She has a long career in public policy having served under the Beattie, Bush, Rudd, and Gillard administrations, including as an adviser to the Prime Minister. She is a co-founder of the McKell Institute Queensland and sits on the board of the Elizabeth Reid Network which supports women working in politics through professional networking and development opportunities.

Improving workplace culture: Lessons from the legal profession

Kieran Pender

Abstract

The law and politics are both professions where the highest standards of personal conduct are expected. Yet both have been rocked by high-profile allegations of inappropriate workplace behaviour and evidence that such behaviour is not isolated but widespread. In Australia and abroad, the legal profession has sought to confront this challenge. In 2018, the New Zealand legal profession had a significant and enduring #MeToo moment. In 2019, the International Bar Association, the profession's peak body, published a report which found that one in two female lawyers had been bullied and one in three had been sexually harassed. Last year, an independent investigation found that former High Court justice Dyson Heydon had acted inappropriately towards numerous former associates. In individual workplaces, at a regulatory level, and at a profession-wide level, the law has sought to respond to each of these developments. Given the structural similarities, what lessons might politics learn from the law in seeking to address these workplace cultural problems?



Kieran Pender is an honorary lecturer at the College of Law at The Australian National University and a senior adviser with the Human Rights Law Centre. He was previously a senior legal advisor at the International Bar Association, where he led the organisation's work to promote diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. Kieran is also an award-winning journalist, having reported from across the globe for *The Guardian*, and serves on the advisory council of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership.

With all due respect: Gendered patterns of discursive gatekeeping in the Australian Senate

Joanna Richards

Abstract

As of 2019, the Australian Senate has an equal gender makeup, comprising of 38 women and 38 men. However, the treatment of women in the Australian Senate has not consistently improved. A wealth of research suggests that equal representation in parliament does not guarantee equal treatment and that a gap exists between winning a seat and making a difference. A key reason for this is the way in which discourse shapes and produces the authority of a speaker in important decision-making bodies. This paper combines a discourse analysis of the official Hansard transcripts with a linguistic ethnography of the Australian Senate to illustrate the ways in which women are discursively limited. Results show that women parliamentarians are afforded less authority, as their speech is limited by patterns of gendered gatekeeping tactics, such as interruption, claims of hysteria, claims of incompetence, claims of deception, and claims of recalcitrance.



Joanna Richards is a PhD Candidate at the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis at the University of Canberra. Her research focuses on women in political leadership, discourse, and cognitive linguistics. Her thesis examines the impact conceptual metaphors have on women in executive political office.

Essential part of life or essentially ignored?: Combining care labour with parliamentary duties

Pia Rowe

Abstract

Despite significant efforts to increase women's participation in the paid workforce, politics in Australia remains overwhelmingly male-dominated. One of the issues contributing to this problem is women's disproportionate share of the care labour and the persistent cultural norms which continue to reinforce the gender binary in the division of public and private duties. A significant oversight to date, however, is the frequent conceptualisation of care duties solely in reference to children, or more specifically, babies and young children. As such, while some structural support is already in place for childcare, the diversity of caring roles has received very little attention. In this paper, I examine the parliament as a family-friendly workplace, focusing in particular on caring as a multi-faceted role. In doing so, I argue that while 'babies are ok', we need to shift the discourse on care labour if we are to see actual change in the workplace practices.



Pia Rowe is a Research Fellow at the 50/50 by 2030 Foundation, Faculty of Business, Government and Law, University of Canberra. Her research interests include gender studies and innovative forms of citizen-participation, particularly in forums that are often overlooked in traditional paradigms. Pia is currently the project lead on an Australian study on the division of unpaid labour at home during COVID-19.

Is the Australian Constitution a barrier to a more inclusive parliament?

Kim Rubenstein

Abstract

In this paper, Professor Rubenstein returns to the legal foundations of Australia's parliamentary system, the Australian Constitution, to ask whether it is part of the problem underpinning Australia's slow progress on more inclusive policy and practice in Australian parliaments. As it presently stands, would it be constitutional to support or mandate moves to ensure a more inclusive parliament? Would it be constitutional to subject Federal Court judges to the Sex Discrimination Act? Would 'shared representation', where two people job-share representing a seat in the House of Representatives or Senate, as advocated for in other jurisdictions, be constitutional? To what extent do we need to update our Constitution to ensure a more inclusive system of representative democracy?



Kim Rubenstein is a Professor in the Faculty of Business, Government and Law and Co-Director of the 50/50 by 2030 Foundation at the University of Canberra. She was the Director of the Centre for International and Public Law at The Australian National University (ANU) from 2006–2015 and the Inaugural Convener of the ANU Gender Institute from 2011–2012. She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law and the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

What do we want? Why do we want it now? Why does it matter?

The Hon. Sharman Stone

Abstract

Australian women have long observed that the most powerful, highest-status, and best-rewarded positions are mostly held by men. This gendered hierarchy has significant impacts on the safety and life chances of women at work and in the home. The patriarchy also imposes barriers for women aspiring to leading, higher-status, and better-rewarded positions, including in the most powerful institution in the country, the federal parliament. The Australian federal parliament is no longer considered by the majority to be providing the best leadership for the good of the country. Unfortunately, a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable society is not likely to be fostered by any Australian government until there is widespread and permanent change to the misogynist culture and procedures which maintain men in the most senior parliamentary positions both as politicians and staff. The long-standing dysfunctional parliamentary and party processes which sustain the gender imbalance are now playing out in full view of the public through widespread allegations of sexual harassment and some criminal behaviour. What needs to be done is obvious and achievable, but it is unlikely that the changes will be enacted unless and until voters demonstrate that they will not support a party which chooses to maintain the current culture and its leadership.



The Hon. Sharman Stone is a writer, human rights advocate, academic, and one of Australia's longest serving women parliamentarians (1996–2016). Representing one of the country's poorest rural electorates she developed a reputation as a fearless and outspoken champion for minority women, in particular their sexual and reproductive health rights and their economic and political empowerment. Sharman was appointed as Australia's third Global Ambassador for Women and Girls from 2017–2020 and was founding patron of the Centre for Gender, Peace and Security at Monash University, where she is currently Professor of Practice in Politics and International Relations.

A gender-sensitive parliamentary workplace for both elected representatives and staff

Tània Verge

Abstract

The ways in which parliaments are stratified by gender and produce power inequalities impact on both elected representatives and staff, but most academic research largely focuses on MPs, and practitioners' recommendations tend to address the needs of MPs and the staff in a disconnected fashion. This paper discusses how all groups that work in a legislature are affected in an intertwined way by the gendered operation of existing practices and processes. For example, sexual harassment often occurs across diverse groups in parliament; late-evening plenary sessions hinder work-life balance not only for MPs but also for the staff of various parliamentary services; and gender-blind legislation results from a lack of gender competence in both legislators and legal counsellors. Drawing on the gender action plan of the Parliament of Catalonia (2020), the paper presents several actions that aim to improve the parliamentary workplace for all building occupants through an integrated gender-sensitive approach.



Tània Verge is Full Professor of Politics and Gender at Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF). Her research focuses on how political parties and parliaments are patterned through gender. She has advised the Speaker and the gender-focused reference group of the Parliament of Catalonia on the adoption and implementation of the institution's gender action plan and in May 2021 was appointed Minister of Equality and Feminisms of the Catalan Government.

Changing the conditions underpinning perceived gendered entitlement in parliaments as a workplace

Chris Wallace

Abstract

Unequal power relations allow noxious behaviours like bullying, harassment, and assault to flourish, notably in Australian parliaments where power is especially concentrated and there is an amplified sense of entitlement among the powerful. To be effective, mitigation measures must include a robust and independent complaints process, demonstrable and transparent consequences for offenders, and regular, anonymous, publicly available surveys of MPs, political staffers, and ancillary staff to track the frequency of perceived offences compared to the number of complaints. These measures are necessary but not sufficient because of parliamentary offenders' amplified sense of entitlement, which lies at the heart of the offences. As Olufemi argues, 'Rapists know that rape is wrong and still commit it because of a sense of entitlement to someone else's bodily autonomy.' Active measures must be taken to induce real diversity in parliamentary ecosystems to undercut gendered power imbalances.



Chris Wallace is Associate Professor, 50/50 by 2030 Foundation, Faculty of Business Government and Law, University of Canberra, where she works on how to achieve gender equity in public sector leadership positions. Chris has worked in the Australian Parliament as both a staffer and a journalist. She did her doctorate on political biography as political intervention at The Australian National University's School of History, where she subsequently undertook an ARC DECRA Fellowship examining the World War II influence strategies of Richard Casey, Maie Casey, and Patricia Jarrett at the Australian Legation in Washington 1940–1942.

Parliamentary (male) privilege: Why we need an enforceable code of conduct for MPs

Senator Larissa Waters

Abstract

Recent years have seen a dramatic decline in community trust in politics and democratic institutions more broadly, with the tone of so-called 'debate' in parliament disgusting many Australians. Parliament house has also become an increasingly unsafe workplace for women, with sexism and misogyny rife and a disturbing number of allegations of assault and harassment made against sitting members. Existing ministerial standards are weak, opaque, and enforced completely at the Prime Minister's discretion. These standards have clearly not deterred questionable behaviour by parliamentarians, both in and out of the chamber. The time has come for a binding and enforceable parliamentary code of conduct that has the power to hold all MPs to account for misconduct, including harassment. An independent body must be able to investigate complaints and censure, fine, or suspend offending MPs. Senator Waters will talk about how a code of conduct can restore public confidence in the parliament and discuss the Greens' own Parliamentary Standards Bill.



Senator Larissa Waters is the first Greens Senator for Queensland and is the Greens Leader in the Senate and Co-Deputy Leader of the Australian Greens. She took office in July 2011 and is the national spokesperson on: Women, Democracy, and Mining & Resources. As Leader of the Greens in the Senate she is working to improve federal laws to put an end to domestic violence, transition to renewable energy sources, and clean up politics by ending corporate donations to political parties which buy favours for the big end of town.

Next steps



Photo by Social Estate on Unsplash

This two-day workshop is just the beginning of our work to support reform to ensure Australia's Parliament House is a safe and welcoming environment for women. Following this workshop, the model code of conduct will be finalised along with other key findings from the two days into a formal submission to the Independent Inquiry into Commonwealth Parliamentary workplaces led by Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins.

The submission and model code, along with other key documents and resources from the workshop will be made available on the event website at <https://giwl.anu.edu.au/events/parliament-gendered-workplace-towards-new-code-conduct-0>.

A selection of papers from the workshop will be published as a special issue of the *Australasian Parliamentary Review* later in 2021. This will

ensure the workshop makes a contribution to the scholarly literature on parliament as a workplace, as well as making a policy contribution.

Continued effort and advocacy is essential to ensure genuine reform is implemented as a result of the Inquiry and participants and attendees are encouraged to use these resources to push for change.

As we all go our separate ways, we need to work together as a coalition of leaders and researchers to bring the model code to the attention of those with the power to implement it, maintain public pressure on the need for gender equity and parliamentary reform, and promote a national conversation on what is needed to make parliament a gender-equal workplace.

Thank you

A big thank you to our speakers and participants for sharing their research and insights, and a particular thank you to those who travelled to Canberra from across Australia to attend during these extraordinary times.

Special thanks to Michelle Staff and Liliana Oyarzun Silva for their work over several months to pull the program and event together. The event would not have been possible without the in-kind support of SPIR and the CASS marketing and communications team, particularly Adam Spence for the broadcast production and Prakash Subramanian and Dylan Wang for their support with the website as well as Danika Wadey for graphic design



From left to right: Natalie Barr, Liliana Oyarzun, Blair Williams, Michelle Staff, Marian Sawer



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