

Thursday 8th April 2021

Changes to workplace laws recommended by Respect@Work report ignored by Government

The Morrison Government's response to the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's "Respect@Work" report fails to commit to key recommendations that would strengthen women's rights to a safe workplace.

Having sat on the report for more than 12 months, the Government's "Roadmap to Respect" has specifically ignored the recommendations by the Commissioner for stronger powers to investigate, new regulations under Work Health and Safety laws, and changes to the Fair Work Act.

The Government's roadmap commits to important education, training and awareness, but stops short on delivering real rights to women at work enshrined in legislation.

The Government has also specifically knocked back the request by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner for greater scope and powers to commence investigations.

The Government has also failed to accept the recommendation to change the Fair Work Act to explicitly prohibit sexual harassment. The Government's promise to amend the current 'stop bullying' provisions will not provide sufficient access to justice for workers.

The roadmap fails to commit the Morrison Government to voting in favour of a new Health and Safety regulation being decided next month by Federal, State and Territory Health and Safety Ministers.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"The Government's 'Roadmap to Respect' released today fails to deliver on essential changes.

"Given the chance to do something real and significant, the Morrison Governments roadmap is stuck in the slow lane.

"They sat on this report for over 12 months, and having been shamed into actually responding, they have the ignored the most important recommendations of the report – recommendations that would have delivered real change at the workplace.

"The Sex Discrimination Commissioner's report recommended changes to health and safety laws and the Fair Work Act to provide protections against sexual harassment, offer rights to women, and real responsibilities to employers for a safe workplace. The Government has left these recommendations on the table in favour of minor changes that will not deliver new rights to workers.

"Again, the Government has shown they cannot back their statements with real action.

"Education and awareness are important but unless they are backed up with rights and legal consequences, they fail the working women of Australia."

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