23 February 2021

Statement on the sexual assault and harassment of political staffers in the Australian Parliament

Every worker deserves a safe workplace, regardless of where they are employed.

The Public Service Association of NSW/CPSU NSW condemns all forms of sexual violence as unacceptable and is deeply concerned at reports emerging from our Federal Parliament.

Sexual assault and harassment are criminal offences and we encourage anyone subjected to this behaviour to call the police. All women should be able to feel safe at work and all legislators, state and federal, must ensure the Parliaments that establish our laws set the highest possible workplace standards. This must begin with enforcing existing laws for all parliamentary staff and Members of Parliament.

The Public Service Association of NSW covers electorate and ministerial staff members in the NSW Parliament. Unfortunately, we have had to support our members experiencing bullying and harassment issues whilst working for MPs from all political parties.

The PSA conducted our *What Women Want* survey last year. The largest survey of working women in NSW, *What Women Want* found that sexual harassment, when combined with workplace bullying, remains one of the top-six issues women want focussed on at work. Women shared their stories of being harassed, then their employers refusing to act.

The role of a political staffer is made more vulnerable because of the limitation of the enforced temporary nature of staffer employment, and the limited appeal jurisdiction available to them. Political staffers have less employment protection than other workers, but this should be no excuse for failing to make their workplaces safe.

We commit to work with the NSW Parliament to improve the mechanisms in place to combat sexual harassment and assault, including the compliance officer role being designed at present.

The PSA Executive has improved how we support members experiencing sexual harassment and assault including by introducing our Legal Services Unit and restoring the role of Women's Officer. We will continue to work on mechanisms in workplaces to reduce the incidence of sexual harassment and assault and for employers to better support workers when it occurs.

The safest workplace is a unionised workplace.

Stewart Little
General Secretary
Public Service Association of NSW

AUTHORISED BY STEWART LITTLE, GENERAL SECRETARY,
PUBLIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF NSW, 160 CLARENCE STREET SYDNEY