

A model code of conduct for Australian Parliamentary workplaces



Australian
National
University

THE GLOBAL
INSTITUTE
FOR WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP



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.

A model code of conduct:

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