



Australian Government
**Department of Industry, Science,
Energy and Resources**

Kate Jenkins
Sex Discrimination Commissioner
Australian Human Rights Commission
By email to cpwreview@humanrights.gov.au

Kate,

I am writing to you in my capacity as the Chief Operating Officer in response to your letter dated 1 July 2021 to Mr David Fredericks, Secretary of the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER), seeking contributions to the Independent Review into Commonwealth Workplaces (Review).

Specifically this letter is to provide the Commission with information about innovative and good-practice policies, processes, and approaches in the prevention and handling of workplace bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault implemented in DISER.

The department takes all allegations of misconduct including sexual harassment and assault very seriously, and treats complaints with respect and confidence.

Reports of workplace bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault:

We recognise there can be a range of factors that influence the decision to report incidents. To offer flexibility to our people, there are various internal avenues for raising concerns including with SES, Workplace Contact Officers or with Case Managers. Where allegations are received in the department that may involve crimes, and where mandatory reporting is required, the investigator will comply with the relevant legislation. Employees are encouraged to report criminal matters to the Australian Federal Police. Employees are also advised that they may also make a public interest disclosure.

Handling complaints/support:

When deciding an appropriate process for a response to allegations, the nature of the offence and the wishes of the alleged victim are considered. The department's Code of Conduct procedures provide for allegations to be investigated and a range of sanctions imposed, including termination of employment where serious misconduct is confirmed. All parties involved in allegations of sexual harassment and assault matters are appropriately supported throughout an investigation and have access to the Employee Assistance Program. The department maintains the confidentiality of everyone involved in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988*.

The department also encourages our people to talk to one of our workplace contact officers who are specifically trained to have sensitive conversations with people and provide information about options for resolving their concerns. In addition staff are able to book into a 'chat with a case manager' meeting to discuss their concerns. Case Managers are people with considerable human resources experience and expertise in investigating allegations and supporting employees who raise complaints.

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Education/Training:

On commencement, new employees must complete a mandatory training module on respectful workplace behaviours and all employees are required to complete the module every second year to refresh their knowledge. In April 2021, the Secretary encouraged all staff to read Comcare's Practical Guidance publications for workers and employers on Workplace Sexual Harassment (copy attached). The department has also made Comcare's sexual harassment self-paced online learning programs available to staff on our intranet and encouraged all staff to complete them.

In 2021, the department implemented a new initiative which includes additional support mechanisms to improve the capability and confidence of members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) and Executive Level staff to handle difficult conversations and support staff when raising sensitive matters. The department made available the opportunity to participate in individual or group coaching sessions with a highly experienced executive coach, consultant and mentor to assist in facilitating sensitive conversations with staff. In addition to the executive coaching, the department also arranged for SES and Executive Level staff to have access to onsite Employee Assistance Program – Manager Assist.

As requested in your letter to the Secretary, the department has shared details of the Review with DISER staff and encouraged staff to provide any responses directly to the Human Rights Commission.

If you would like further information regarding the above, or copies of any DISER's policies or other documentation, please contact James Hogben – Manager Workplace Health and Safety and Case Management at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Kylie Bryant
Chief Operating Officer
Corporate and Digital Division
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources

29 July 2021

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From: Fredericks, David
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 11:24 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Secretary's Message | Workplace safety | 6 April 2021 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, SCIENCE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES

Message from the Secretary



Colleagues

As I have said on many occasions, I want this department to be the best possible place to work.

The Executive and I are committed to ensuring every single one of you works in an environment that is safe, respectful and inclusive.

Over recent months, as you know, there has been very strong concern across the community about sexual harassment, violence, and a lack of respect for women in our community and in our workplaces.

In one of my weekly emails to all staff in late February, I emphasised that your safety and wellbeing is of the utmost importance to me and to the Executive.

And just last week Comcare released workplace sexual harassment guidance to support employers, managers and workers, with a focus on prevention, impacts and reporting.

I encourage you to read this [advice](#) and ensure you are well informed.

This guidance aligns to our [workplace behaviour policy](#), and you can always talk to one of our [workplace contact officers](#) if you need further advice.

I know that events over recent months have affected staff in different ways. I understand that, for some staff, they have caused significant distress.

If you have been affected by the events of recent months, the department is here to support you.

If you are feeling unsafe in the workplace or at home, I encourage you to get the help and support you need via any of the services below.

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We have case managers in the department who can provide you with advice on any workplace issue. Please email [REDACTED] or contact a member of the team directly on [REDACTED]

Alternatively you can drop in to meet a Case Manager in person or via VC by registering to attend one of our [Chat to a Case Manager Sessions](#) that have been scheduled over the coming weeks.

Your matter will be handled discretely, confidentially and sensitively.

You can contact 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732 or www.1800respect.org.au) which is the national confidential sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling service.

You can also reach out to your manager or the department's [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) or directly on [REDACTED]. This service is available free of charge to all staff requiring counselling support.

Details on all the advice and support available to staff is on [iCentral](#).

I want to ensure that together we create a respectful, inclusive and safe workplace for everyone – consistent with our recently released [Inclusion Strategy 2021-23](#).

Please know you have my full support, and the full support of the Executive, in ensuring you feel safe and are treated respectfully while doing your job.

Together we can all contribute towards a safe and inclusive culture in this department.

David