

Media Release

Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture
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Monday, 19 April 2021

TACKLING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN OUR COURTS AND TRIBUNALS

The Andrews Labor Government has welcomed the report of the Review of Sexual Harassment in Victorian Courts – marking another important step forward in stamping out sexual harassment in the workplace.

Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes said the review provided a clear path forward to address sexual harassment in the sector and pledged to work with relevant agencies, heads of jurisdiction and Ministers to ensure its recommendations are addressed.

Led by former Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner, Dr Helen Szoke AO, the landmark report outlines 20 recommendations to eliminate this unacceptable behaviour and build a safe, positive and accountable workplace culture throughout Victorian courts and VCAT.

Key recommendations include amending legislation to ensure everyone working in Victorian courts and VCAT is protected against sexual harassment, and exploring further legislative changes to address systemic issues of sexual harassment, discrimination and victimisation.

The report also calls on the courts to provide multiple ways for workers to report sexual harassment, adopt victim-survivor-centred responses and provide targeted, expert training to all court staff.

Drawing on the lived experience of those who have been subjected to sexual harassment, the report reveals a culture where inappropriate behaviour has been normalised or ignored – making it difficult to speak up.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission helped courts staff to confidentially share their experiences with the review and access support, providing detailed online submissions or interviews.

The Government response will contribute to its broader efforts to prevent and better respond to sexual harassment in all Victorian workplaces, including through its recently established Ministerial Taskforce on Workplace Sexual Harassment.

The full report can be found at shreview.courts.vic.gov.au/about-the-review.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

“This report puts sexual harassment in Victorian courts and the harm it causes in the spotlight where it can’t be ignored any longer.”

“I welcome this clear path to building a better and safer culture and an aim of stamping out this unacceptable behaviour for good.”

Quote attributable to Chief Justice of Victoria the Honourable Anne Ferguson

“To all those who came forward to share their stories with the review – we have heard you. We are already taking concrete action to implement the report’s recommendations to ensure a strong and safe culture of respect, fairness and inclusion across our courts and VCAT.”

Quote attributable to Review author Dr Helen Szoke AO

“Sexual harassment in our courts has to stop. It causes great harm to victim-survivors, and to the community’s confidence in the system. Urgent action on all twenty recommendations is how we change behaviour and culture.”

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