



24 November 2020

Prime Minister
Hon Scott Morrison MP
By email / online at: <https://www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm>

Dear Prime Minister,

Australian Women Lawyers Ltd. (AWL) writes to register its serious concern about recent allegations that have been made against Attorney General, Christian Porter MP and Minister Alan Tudge MP on ABC's 4 Corners program.

As Australia's peak body for women lawyer organisations, AWL and its members were alarmed to learn of the allegations against, Mr Porter, given his position as the First Law Officer of the Crown. In particular, the allegations that he has:

- been '*deeply sexist*' and '*misogynist in his treatment of women, in the way he spoke about women*';
- sidelined '*women in any kind of forum in which they want to be involved*';
- treated women '*as a joke*' and '*objects of ridicule*';
- treated women as though '*the only point to women...was for him to hit on them, or for women to be made fun of, particularly for the way they looked*'; and
- made sexualised comments about female law students. [<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-11-10/four-corners-investigation-christian-porter-sexism-inappropriate/12862910>]

The ABC 4 Corners investigation also infers that there is a broader pattern of behaviour by MPs, including the Attorney General, of abusing their positions and engaging in inappropriate workplace behaviour with staff.

In circumstances where AWL has staunchly advocated against sexual harassment and discrimination in the legal profession, and in a year where we have already seen a plethora of allegations about sexual harassment from a former High Court Judge, it is incredibly disheartening to hear allegations that our Attorney General has modelled such behaviour throughout university, as a prosecutor and in his current office.

AWL recognises the media reporting does not indicate that a specific complaint has been levelled against the Attorney General, nevertheless AWL would encourage your office to seriously consider:

- a review of the Members of Parliament Staff (MoPs) Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy to encourage confidential reporting of bullying and harassment by current and former MoPs in line with AWL's Seven Strategies for Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession (<https://australianwomenlawyers.com.au/sexual-harassment-in-the-legal-profession/>);
- undertaking an independent review of the culture in which MoPs work to identify any systemic issues contributing to the repeated allegations of inappropriate workplace behaviours and sexual harassment; and
- if any allegations about sexism or inappropriate relationships with staff are substantiated against the Attorney-General, whether then the Attorney General is an appropriate person to hold that office, given the expectations of the legal profession and his role in upholding the rule of law.

We also urge you to expediently adopt all recommendations of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's Respect@Work Report, along with any further reforms in this area proposed by the Law Council of Australia.

Sincerely,
Leah Marrone
President, Australian Women Lawyers Ltd.