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**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

TABLING STATEMENT

**ACT Government's Response to Australian Human Rights Commission's
Respect@Work - National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces**

**Presented by
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TABLING STATEMENT

ACT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE RESPECT@WORK REPORT – AGREEMENT TO TABLE

- Madam Speaker, today I am tabling the ACT Government's Response to the Australian Human Rights Commission's, 'Respect at Work: National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces'.
- The Respect at Work report provides a clear, evidence-based and survivor-centred approach to responding to workplace sexual harassment.
- Our response to this Report sets out the ACT's long-term commitment to creating a culture of respectful behaviour across all workplaces in the ACT.
- In our response we have provided an overarching position to each of the 55 recommendations made in the Respect at Work report.
- This will guide our future and ongoing work to understand, prevent and respond to sexual harassment at work, based on the principles of respect, equity, diversity and human rights.
- Madam Speaker, all individuals and workers have a fundamental right to feel safe and protected in their workplace, and in the community. This includes safety from psycho-social hazards.
- Sexual harassment denies victims this right, and often has profound and destructive impacts for all aspects of their lives.
- Distressingly, sexual harassment remains pervasive across workplaces and the broader community, regardless of setting, level, industry, or location.

- In 2018, the Australian Human Rights Commission found that over four in five Australian women and over half of Australian men over the age of 15 had been sexually harassed at some point in their lifetimes.
- This is a confronting and unacceptable reality. The injustice of this is undeniable.
- We must show that as a Government, and as an ACT community more broadly, that we reject sexual harassment in any, and *all* circumstances and are committed to continuing work to promote respectful workplaces, free of sexual harassment.
- Madam Speaker, the ACT Government has already taken significant steps to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in workplaces, and across the community and to promote equality and respect.
- Fostering gender equity in Canberra workplaces is a key priority under the *Second Action Plan* of the *ACT Women's Plan 2016-2026* which I launched in March 2020.
- To achieve this, we are providing enhanced support for women, improving opportunities for women in the traditionally male-dominated building and construction industries, and promoting programs to improve gender equality in workplace leadership and participation.
- This will make a vital contribution to developing respectful and equal cultures and practices in workplaces across the ACT.
- We have also developed respectful relationships education across our ACT schools to promote attitudes and behaviours which reject violence and value respect and equality.
- Addressing the social and cultural drivers of gender-based violence through education is critical to prevent sexual harassment.
- Led by the experts in the sector, I have recently established the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program, to reinvigorate and redirect our response to sexual assault.

- The Prevention Working Group and the Workplace Reference Group under this program have already made excellent progress in developing advice to guide our future responses to workplace sexual harassment in the context of preventing and promoting gender equality.
- However, Madam Speaker, the ACT cannot address sexual harassment alone. Sexual harassment is everyone's business and responsibility.
- We are therefore committed to working with our Federal, State and Territory partners to develop national solutions to workplace sexual harassment.
- We have submitted this response to National Cabinet, and I look forward to working with all Australian Governments and my colleagues in the Women's Safety Taskforce to develop collaborative and coordinated responses to sexual harassment in the ACT and across Australia.
- The ACT is contributing to the development of the next *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children* to continue the progress made under the current plan to make Australia safer for all.
- Madam Speaker, sexual harassment is not inevitable. It is preventable.
- Every Canberran, and every Australian, can contribute to addressing and eliminating it.
- I am confident that in the ACT, we can come together to build a society where all people feel safe and protected and I look forward to working alongside our community to drive meaningful change in workplaces and long-lasting change to cultures of behavior.
- This response is an important step along this path.
- I thank all individuals who have been involved in the consultation, development and drafting of this significant Response.
- I commend the Response to the Assembly.

ENDS