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Submission to the inquiry into the development of codes of conduct for Commonwealth parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and parliamentary workplaces

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into the development of codes of conduct for Commonwealth parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and parliamentary workplaces. I support such a code of conduct and indeed have campaigned for one since my election in 2010, with the development of a code included in my agreement with the then Gillard Government. It is deeply disappointing that it has taken until now to be in reach of an effective, enforceable code that holds all parliamentarians and their staff to the highest standards of behaviour.

To have any hope of achieving meaningful reform, a code must ensure people are treated respectfully and professionally, and not be limited to addressing behaviour that simply meets the legal definitions of workplace bullying, sexual assault, sexual harassment and so on. Given how little has been done previously to tackle serious allegations against MPs and staff, it is unsurprising that many people feel they have no choice but to put up with poor behaviour. The consequence of this for the culture of the parliamentary workplace is grim, and well documented in the Australian Human Rights Commission's Review, *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*.

A code of conduct must also be accompanied by an Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission that has the power to respond to complaints and, crucially, to apply meaningful sanctions when necessary. I understand that one of the biggest barriers to someone making a complaint in the parliamentary workplace is the well-founded concern that the only thing that will come from it will be damage to their own career and wellbeing, while the perpetrator suffers no repercussions. This must change.

Finally, I take this opportunity to share with the committee my community's utter despair at the misbehaviour of Members of Parliament and the strength of constituents' demands for urgent reform. It is our duty to make sure Parliament is an exemplar of a safe and respectful workplace and to this end I strongly support an enforceable code of conduct.

Yours sincerely

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