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Federal Politics Politics

## Julia Banks: Former Liberal MP says WA Senator Linda Reynolds didn't help when told of sexual harassment claim

**Kimberley Caines** The West Australian  
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📷 Senator Linda Reynolds. Credit: Sam Mooy/Getty Images



The former Liberal MP at the centre of the latest workplace culture scandal in Parliament House has singled out embattled WA Senator Linda Reynolds for “going underground” when she shared her claims of sexual harassment.

Julia Banks opened up about the lack of support she received from women in Parliament after shedding light on the night an unnamed senior cabinet minister allegedly touched her inappropriately in a room full of other MPs.

- [Former Liberal MP accuses Prime Minister of gaslighting and bullying](#)

"I could smell the alcohol on his breath, and then he put his hand on my knee and ran it up my leg on my inner thigh and then got up and moved about one-metre away and turned back to check that I was still there," Ms Banks told Sunrise.

"I just froze when he did that."

Ms Banks said this behaviour in Parliament House was not uncommon and that she received little support.

"At the time, both the major parties said, 'Oh, yes, that's terrible.' I wasn't the only woman who called out the bad behaviour at the time," she told the Today Show.



 Julia Banks. Credit: Tracey Nearmy/Getty Images

"There were, you know, at least five other Liberal MPs who'd called it out. It's just that the women who stayed in Parliament then went underground, such as Linda Reynolds."

When asked by *The West Australian* if Ms Reynolds spoke with Ms Banks about the alleged incident, the former Defence Minister referred to a speech she made to the Senate in 2018, following a leadership coup against Malcolm Turnbull.

"I have consistently said publicly that members of the Liberal Party will achieve effective change by changing the Party," Ms Reynolds said.

"I continue to work within the Liberal Party to champion cultural and structural change for women across the party. I remain firmly convinced that this is where real and enduring change for women will occur, and indeed is."

Ms Reynolds came under scrutiny earlier this year when former Liberal staffer Brittany Higgins spoke out about allegedly being raped in the office of Ms Reynolds in 2019.

Ms Banks said that three days before she came forward with her allegations in 2018, Senator Reynolds had been in the Senate condemning such behaviour as “terrible” and “awful”.

“And then, you know, after she spoke with Morrison, she becomes a minister and then she said, ‘We will deal with this internally’,” Ms Banks said.





📷 Brittany Higgins. Credit: Damian NewsWire Shaw/News Corp Australia

The former corporate lawyer, and former Member for Chisholm in Melbourne, has launched an attack on Prime Minister Scott Morrison for “silencing” her.

“He offered me an all-expenses paid trip to New York,” she said.

She claimed she was driven out of Parliament by bullying and intimidation in the wake of the 2018 leadership spill.

Three months later, she moved to the crossbench as an independent until an election the following year, where she did not recontest.

A workplace review of Parliament is currently underway.

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