

Legislative Council

Hansard

Tuesday 2 December 2025

The President, Mr Farrell, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

[excerpt...]

MOTION

Alcohol and Drugs Members' Statement

[3.06 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to make some brief comments here and really to endorse the contributions of other members that have spoken at more length and very well on the importance of what we are contemplating here today and how pleased we all are to see progress made on it.

I also absolutely acknowledge the importance of that Bolt report the motion for respect. It was prompted around the time there were some similar reviews being undertaken in parliaments in different jurisdictions, and it was the Brittany Higgins incident in federal parliament that prompted me to write to then premier Gutwein to suggest that we undertake a similar workplace culture review here in this parliament. He very promptly responded to that and got the work underway for the Bolt review and then the subsequent report from that.

I think that has been a real fundamental seismic shift actually as a result of that in a positive direction. Of course that report, valuable though is, is just a report on a shelf unless it's actioned and so the work of the committee that was formed and has progressed since the time of the report has been absolutely fundamental to making sure that what we see is tangible change and real progress. Sometimes that seemed a bit slow, but here we are with something really important to be agreeing on today and to see come into effect once it's been dealt with here and in the other place.

I would also particularly like to thank the committee members who have been progressing this work and all those other MPs and individuals who've contributed into the work through feedback or through participation in some way. There has clearly been exemplary work done by the project team, Mr Andrew Young and the rest of the team members who have done this and underpinning the work with the committee to bring this to us today, so thank you so much for that.

I am also aware - and others have mentioned it and I want to just make note of it too and add my recognition to the work of the clerks across this period of time. There has already been significant structural and cultural changes afoot, which were needed and have already begun making good change in this workplace for all who enter it and work within it.

These three pieces of work, just very briefly, I am not going to go into detail on them other than just to raise a couple of things that perhaps have either not been touched on yet or things that I would like to particularly emphasise. They are certainly there to assist us in ensuring that this is a safe and respectful workplace, and a code of conduct is very fundamental to that effort. It was important to update what we had in place, which was not sufficient and what we are going to have now as a result of this is a much more fit-for-purpose document,

which hopefully then becomes a living culture once it is in place. That will only happen if we do engage in that training work, we need to engage in. If we engage in attitudinal change and monitoring of ourselves that we are actually living the intent of the code of conduct. I'm one for professional development and training of MPs. It's a sticky subject. No one can tell us what to do, it would appear. I've always argued this on some other matters to do with public accountability around MPs.

There should be public reporting of training undertaken by MPs. There should be public reporting of whether MPs, have a working with children card. We can't be forced to have one. I think it's appropriate and fair all citizens and voters understand about all MPs, whether they A) have a working with vulnerable people card and B), whether they've engaged or are engaging in ongoing professional development and training. That should be something that's publicly reported on somewhere in the public domain. It can become a piece of information that an informed electorate has about their members representing them, and then also about people who might be asking for their vote or support in future elections.

I don't know whether that's the intention, that there'll be some form of reporting about training engaged in and who's up to date with their training or who's engaged in it or not, but there should be in my view. I'm interested in terms of the code of conduct application, and I raised this in the briefing. There may be an answer, or it may have been addressed in the member for Murchison's opening remarks, and I missed it, because I was focusing on reading material at the time, on whether the code of conduct applies during election periods.

Here in this place, we are MPs and acting and employed as MPs right up to our election day. We don't have an election period as such where there's any question over whether we would be covered by a code of conduct. Of course, in the other place there's a prorogation and then there's a period of time during which ministers are still ministers, but members of parliament who are running for re-election aren't technically regarded as MPs during that time. Certainly in the eyes of our Integrity Commission, that's the case, because we've already had that addressed in this state, that complaints made to the Integrity Commission about things that occurred during election period, about an MP who's running for re-election can't be addressed by our Integrity Commission because technically that person's not an MP and not covered by the remit of the Integrity Commission.

It's probably important for us to understand if and how this code of conduct may apply to MPs who are running for re-election and during that election period. When I say MPs, I mean MPs in the other place, because of course that does apply to us in this place.

Ms Forrest - Except for the few days when you don't know whether you've won the seat or not.

Ms WEBB - There's a tiny period of time. Yes, true. Well, sometimes it's not a tiny period, 10 days can feel really long, can't it?

Ms Forrest - The election has already been had then too.

Ms WEBB - Yes, people have made their choices.

Ms Forrest - Yeah, you can't do much after that.

Ms WEBB - The complaints commissioner's role, is an excellent role to have in place. Two things will be crucial for it to successfully complete the work its tasked with. One will be the appointment process. And then we arrive at having a person in place in that role and the deputy commissioner role. There can be no question that all MPs have full faith in the person

who has been selected in a way that's accountable and rigorous and able to be delivering full confidence. That they can undertake that role appropriately. That's something for us to be observing as we go forward, whether we've framed up here to successfully deliver.

The second thing is resourcing and the ability to do that role. It's far too common a story in this jurisdiction for us to see statutory entities, oversight entities, integrity entities be underfunded and not able to fully do their job. I'm assuming that is not going to be the case here, that we will be equipping this role and the people who are in it to do the job that they have to do and be available to do that fully. We'll be waiting to see how that plays out over time.

Cultural change is fundamental alongside these documents and the words on a page. It is fundamental to the success of actually delivering what we want to see delivered in terms of a safe and respectful workplace. I note that comments were made acknowledging the potential there can be a weaponisation potentially of complaints processes, and that's something we'll need to be carefully observing and monitoring.

Essentially it still remains an interesting system here in this very unique place where at the end of the day, MPs are policing MPs. That's as it is, and these arrangements here give us some more accountable and clear mechanisms where things can be dealt with more appropriately and independently. It helps to work against the more problematic aspects of selfpolicing.

That's the extent of my contribution. I didn't mention the alcohol and drug statement, but of course, that's a fairly straightforward positive step for us to be taking. We have already seen culture change in this space in this place. This helps us to focus our minds on what we are all agreeing is appropriate and necessary to provide safety and respect in our workplace.

I am very pleased to be supporting this motion to bring these things forward and to see them, once they've been dealt with here and in the other place, hopefully come into effect. Then we observe and see where we get to from here. All of us should feel more comfortable, and hopefully all staff in this place feel more comfortable, once these things are in place, and feel supported and safe.