

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

FACTS AND TIMELINE

Note: public comments by Government are at Attachment C.

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

S37(2)(a), s47C,
s47E(d)

The Prime Minister announced that he would ask Dep Sec Foster 'to assist and advise me on how better those processes can work to support people when incidents of this nature arise'.

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

Minister Birmingham issued a press release announcing the establishment of the Parliamentary Support Line 1800 APH SPT.

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

29 April 2021

Brittany Higgins met with the Prime Minister in Sydney.

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

S37(2)(a), s47C,
s47E(d)

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

The Government released the Final Report. The Prime Minister announced that the Government had agreed to adopt all 10 recommendations and that PM&C would work with the Parliamentary Service Commissioner to stand up the independent complaints mechanism within six weeks.

Brittany Higgins tweeted:

"I am so pleased to hear that all 10 recommendations of the Foster Review will be implemented. These reforms, most notably the independent complaints mechanism, will ensure Parliament House is a safer workplace for all future employees."

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

S37(2)(a), s47C,
s47E(d)

The Parliamentary Workplace Support Service was launched. Minister Birmingham issued a media release. Ms Higgins made a statement to news.com.au upon establishment of the PWSS:

"The establishment of the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service is an acknowledgment by the Government that the existing reporting framework has not been fit for purpose."

Given the lack of existing protections for those employed under the MoP(S) Act [Members of parliament (Staff) Act 1984] and the stark power imbalance between employers and employees – it is essential for there to be a truly independent Parliamentary reporting authority."

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

S37(2)(a), s47C,
s47E(d)

The House of Representatives passed the resolution 'Independent Parliamentary Workplace Complaint Mechanism'

The Senate passed the resolution. Senator Larissa Waters made a statement in relation to the motion, thanking Dep Sec Foster for her work and acknowledging the women who had come forward.

Contents	Page
----------	------

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

Attachments	
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S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

Attachment C – Public comments by Government on Foster Review	29
Attachment D – Terms of Reference tabled by Minister Birmingham in the Senate	45

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

S37(2)(a), s47C, s47E(d)

Background

Scope

What were the terms of reference for your review?

- On 25 February 2021 Minister Birmingham tabled a document in response to Senate Order for Production of Documents No. 1034, on the matter of reviews being conducted by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in response to the alleged sexual assault at Parliament House in March 2019.
- The document noted that the Prime Minister had asked:
 1. Mr Philip Gaetjens to verify the advice the Prime Minister has received from his Office about when his staff became aware of the alleged sexual assault at Parliament House, including checking relevant phone records, taking into account matters raised in the media.
 2. That I conduct a review of whether more could be done to support staff who have been part of a serious incident as part of parliamentary employment. The review is to consider:
 - a. Procedures and processes involved in identifying and reporting a serious incident, that occurs as part of parliamentary employment;
 - b. Steps that can be taken to ensure the processes of reporting and responses to serious incidents are able to be made independent from the employer;
 - c. Recommendations on how to ensure that all reporting and responses to serious incidents are driven by a principle of providing empowerment to the victims; and
 - d. Recommendations on how to ensure that the services and support that are provided to the victim are timely, effective and ongoing.
- The document is included at Attachment D.

s47C, s47E(d)



ATTACHMENT C – PUBLIC COMMENTS BY GOVT ON FOSTER REVIEW

Date	By whom	Comment
25 February 2021	Minister Birmingham: Tabling of terms of reference for the Foster Review in the Senate.	<p><i>Dear Mr President</i></p> <p><i>I write with regard to Senate Order for Production of Documents No. 1034 moved by Senator Gallagher and agreed by the Senate on 24 February 2021, on the matter of reviews being conducted by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in response to an alleged sexual assault at Parliament House in March 2019.</i></p> <p><i>While it would not be appropriate to reveal formal requests from the Prime Minister for advice from his Department that are for the deliberations of Cabinet, the Prime Minister has advised me that he has asked for the following processes to be undertaken by his Department:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Mr Philip Gaetjens, Secretary, to verify the advice the Prime Minister has received from his Office about when his staff became aware of the alleged sexual assault at Parliament House, including checking relevant phone records, taking into account matters raised in the media.</i> <i>2. Ms Stephanie Foster PSM, Deputy Secretary Governance, to conduct a review of whether more could be done to support staff who have been part of a serious incident as part of parliamentary employment. The review is to consider:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. The procedures and processes involved in identifying and reporting a serious incident, that occurs as part of parliamentary employment;</i> <i>b. Steps that can be taken to ensure the processes of reporting and responses to</i>

		<p><i>serious incidents are able to be made independent from the employer;</i></p> <p><i>c. Recommendations on how to ensure that all reporting and responses to serious incidents are driven by a principle of providing empowerment to the victims; and</i></p> <p><i>d. Recommendations on how to ensure that the services and support that are provided to the victim are timely, effective and ongoing.</i></p>
2 March 2021	Minister Birmingham: Press release announcing the establishment of the Parliamentary Support Line 1800 APH SPT.	<p><i>The Government has today established an independent and confidential 24/7 telephone service to support current and former Commonwealth ministerial, parliamentary and electorate office staff, and those who have experienced serious incidents in any Commonwealth Parliamentary workplace.</i></p> <p><i>The Parliamentary Support Line, 1800 APH SPT or 1800 274 778 will provide support or referrals to police and other specialist services.</i></p> <p><i>The Prime Minister’s decision to put in place this urgent and immediate support for staff is implementing an interim recommendation by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Deputy Secretary Stephanie Foster PSM, ahead of the completion of her final report.</i></p> <p><i>This support line is an important step in providing better support to all Parliamentary staffers, their family and friends, whether they work in Parliament House or in electorate offices.</i></p> <p><i>“Every Australian has a basic right to feel safe in their workplace. I encourage current and former Commonwealth Parliamentary employees who have experienced a serious incident in the Parliamentary workplace, or who have been affected by the allegations of serious crimes in the past fortnight, to make use of this private and confidential new service,” Finance Minister Simon Birmingham said.</i></p> <p><i>“While we have a number of reviews looking closely at these matters—and at the wider systems in place—we</i></p>

		<p><i>recognise the need for urgent support to be put in place as soon as possible.</i></p> <p><i>“I want to stress that this is just a first step. This support line will help ensure people get the immediate support they need, including supported referrals to police if required.”</i></p> <p><i>From today, 2 March, 2021 the Parliamentary Support Line will be staffed 24/7 by professionals with training in trauma-informed care, who can provide information, counselling, supported referrals, and assistance in determining pathways to progress complaints.</i></p> <p><i>This is a specific and immediate service developed as one option in addition to the range of services already publicly available, such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• The police on 000, if you are in fear for your immediate safety, or police services in your jurisdiction if you wish to report a criminal offence.</i> <i>• 1800RESPECT, which is available if you or someone you know has experienced sexual, family or domestic violence. Call 1800 737 732 or go to 1800respect.org.au for online counselling, 24 hours a day.</i> <i>• The Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, or equivalent services in your jurisdiction.</i> <i>• MensLine Australia, which is available to men who need help or have concerns about their own behaviour. Call 1300 789 978 or mensline.org.au for around the clock counselling. MensLine Australia is available from anywhere in Australia and is staffed by professional counsellors, experienced in men’s issues.</i> <p><i>This service is an initial response. The ongoing operation of the service will be considered as part of the independent review of workplace culture that is also being established.</i></p> <p><i>The Parliamentary Support Line will be operated by Medibank Health Solutions who also operate 1800RESPECT. It will not have an investigative function and does not replace the need to report criminal offences to the police.</i></p> <p><i>More information about the support line is available at Ministerial and Parliamentary Services.</i></p>
23 March 2021	Prime Minister:	<p><i>...Now to the other rather disturbing events of those further reports last night. I am shocked and I am disgusted.</i></p>

	<p>Press conference (following media reports of a MoP(S) staffer having performed a solo sex act on the desk of an MP)</p>	<p><i>It is shameful. It is just absolutely shameful. I was completely stunned, as I have been on more than one occasion over the course of this last month. All of this has been shocking, it has been disgraceful. It has been a month of such reports. Indeed, reports involving the conduct of staff and of Coalition Government members and ministers, but as you know, reports of equally disgraceful and despicable activities anonymised of those working in other parties. We must get this house in order. We must put the politics aside of these things and we must recognise this problem, acknowledge it, and we must fix it. This has been a very traumatic month. It began with Brittany Higgins and her revelations of what took place in this very building. I remember that day very well, I was equally shocked and stunned at receiving that news also. These events have triggered, right across this building, and indeed right across the country, women who have put up with this rubbish and this crap for their entire lives, as their mothers did, as their grandmothers did. It has been going on, we have been talking about it in this place for a month, they have been living with it for their entire lives. And the women listening to me today know that to be true.</i></p> <p><i>So as much as it has been a topic of discussion here, and around the country specifically in relation to these disgraceful acts, it is something that has been the lived experience of Australian women for a very long time, and I welcome the spotlight that has now been placed on this. I acknowledge that many have not liked or appreciated some of my own personal responses to this over the course of the last month, and I accept that. Whether that was seeking to openly share how I try and deal with such traumatic events, people mightn't like the fact that I discuss these with my family. They are the closest people in my world to me. That is how I deal with things, I always have. I have grown up in a loving and supportive family, and I discuss these things with my family and those who are closest to me. No offence was intended by me saying that I discuss these issues with my wife. Equally, that is in no way an indication that these events had not already dramatically affected me already at that point. Equally, I accept that many were unhappy with the language that I used on the day of the protests. No offence was intended by that either. I could have chosen different words. I have already explained those matters in the House.</i></p> <p><i>But what I am even more concerned about, even more importantly, I acknowledge that many Australians, especially women, believe that I have not heard them, and that greatly distresses me. I have been doing a lot of listening over this past month, but not for the first time,</i></p>
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		<p>now is not the time for me to run over whether as a Minister for Immigration or a Treasurer or a Minister for Social Services, the keen interest I have shown in these issues. I'm not going to do that today. But particularly on these issues over the last month, I have been listening carefully. I have had many colleagues, I have had many friends and others that I have regular contact with, talk with me openly about the issues and the traumatic things that they have had to deal with over their lifetimes and members of their family. Let me tell you what I have heard. Women are too afraid to call out bad behaviour for fear of losing a job or being intimidated in the workplace. That is not OK, and it is not their fault, it is the environment we have allowed to be created. Women who are afraid to walk to their car from the train, and they carry their keys in their hand like a knife for fear of being attacked. That is not OK. That is not acceptable that in this country, a country as great as Australia, women walk daily in that fear. I have heard that women are overlooked, talked over, by men, whether it is in boardrooms, meeting rooms, staff rooms, in media conferences, in cabinets, or anywhere else. Overlooked and treated like they have nothing valuable to contribute. I have heard about being marginalised, women being intimidated, women being belittled, women being diminished, and women being objectified. That is not OK. I have heard that women, when offered a job, take the salary offered because they do not feel they can ask for more, whereas the blokes do and they get it. That is not OK. Whether this is unconscious deafness and blindness, or whether it is wilful malevolence, that is behind all of this, it must be acknowledged, it must be called out, and it must stop. That is all our job. It is my job, it is my Minister's jobs, it is my Members and Senators jobs, it is your job. This is not something that is of a scale that any government can simply change, it is something we must change as a society because we know it happens all over this country. But for me and my house, the House I work in here, then we must take responsibility. It is our problem here, it is our responsibility here, and I'm committed to dealing with that. We must do better in this place, all of us, and in our country we must do better.</p> <p>Now, forgive me the indulgence, forgive me this indulgence. I want women to have at least the same opportunities and the same voice and the same safety as men in this country. I have the deepest of vested interests. Criticise me if you like, for speaking about my daughters, but they are the centre of my life. My wife is the centre of my life. My mother, my widowed mother, is the centre of my life. They motivate me every day on this issue. They have motivated me my entire life, they have taught me the</p>
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		<p><i>values and the faith that sustains me every single day in this job, which is why I am here. I owe them everything. And to them, I say to you girls, I will not let you down. To the many other women who are in this place, who have shared their stories with me, I thank you for your feedback, your honesty, your support, your counsel, and your courage. I know there are plenty of women who work in this building today, whether they be Members or Senators or Ministers, shadow ministers, staff, journalists, who say why should I bother? Why should I bother? Why shouldn't I just walk away? There has never been a more important time for women to stand in this place. I want to see more women in this place. I have done many things to get more women in this place and I intend to do more. I have put more women in my Cabinet than any other Prime Minister ever has before, and I look forward to doing more. I need women to stand with me as we go about this, as we stand together, I need them to stand in this place, I need them to stand right where they are, I need them to continue to blaze the trail right here this place. I admire their courage and I call on it. Questions?</i></p> <p>Journalist: <i>You say it's your responsibility, that you're responsible for the culture in this place and you're committed to dealing with it. What concrete measures are you actually going to take to try and address these problems?</i></p> <p>Prime Minister: <i>A couple of measures. First of all, you are aware of the changes we've already introduced for the direct counselling support that is available, and I suspect particularly for women in this building. I'm pleased to know that that support service is already being used by women in this place, and men in this place, it is also being used by those who are seeking support for how they deal with these issues, and I think that has been a very useful service that has been put in place and the additional resources and support. In addition to that, of course the Jenkins review, Kate Jenkins will be speaking in my party room this morning, and I am looking forward to the multi-party outcomes that come from that process. But I am not waiting for the report to come back. I have asked for the Deputy Secretary Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to come back for me. She is still working on that report and she has asked for some further time on the report to get it right, and that would be, in particular, putting in place a more robust and independent complaints mechanism for staff and members and senators to be able to have access to, to ensure that we can deal with that more fully. I am speaking to all Coalition staff later today. Good people come and work in</i></p>
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		<p><i>this building, you all know that. There are some people who have done some despicable things in this place. These things are just so foreign to me that I can hardly process them, as I am sure I would hope that most people would be in a similar situation. And most people who come to work in this place, I want to assure Australians, do not come here and behave in that way. But there are people who do and that needs to be addressed, and if people have information on that conduct then I implore them to come forward as that is the only way that I can deal with those issues. But it is not just a responsibility for me. I am the leader of the Liberal Party and I'm the Prime Minister of the country and leader of the Government, but we have many people in this building who have responsibility for how this place operates. Whether it is the leaders of other parties, and whether it is those who are presiding officers over these chambers in this place, the many others who support in senior roles the staff around this building, and indeed in the gallery, yourselves, and the leadership within your own organisations have responsibilities here in terms of how things occur in this place as well. We all work in this building, we all have those responsibilities. I am taking mine and I call on others to take theirs.</i></p> <p>Journalist: <i>One of the things that would make women feel a lot safer right now would be if you could make it compulsory for harassment...</i></p> <p>Prime Minister: <i>I couldn't quite hear over the cameras, I'm sorry.</i></p> <p>Journalist: <i>...compulsory harassment and misconduct training for all office staff and MPs in this building, that is something you can do right now, will you commit to that? And do commit to a zero tolerance policy with regards to any of the other individuals involved in the report last night that they will be sacked if they are identified?</i></p> <p>Prime Minister: <i>On the latter point I think we have already demonstrated our resolve on that issue and you can expect us to follow through on it in exactly the same way. That sort of behaviour has no place here, it has absolutely no place there. It is disgusting. In terms of the other recommendation, that is one that I entirely expect the Deputy Secretary to come forward with. So I'm not expecting that to take much longer but I would like to act on all of those recommendations and I anticipate that is one such recommendation that will come forward in that report and one that I would strongly support.</i></p>
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		<p>Journalist: Prime Minister, you say you want more women in this place. This morning Karen Andrews said that she thinks the Liberal Party should seriously consider quotas. Is that something you would consider now and if not why?</p> <p>Prime Minister: My colleagues know that I have been open to that conversation for some time.</p> <p>Journalist: Prime Minister, two things. There will be women listening to your comments this morning wondering why it took you a month to get to their lived reality that they started with on the day where Brittany Higgins came forward. Can you explain why it took you a month to get to this position? And another thing, just following on from the 4 Corners report last night, the security guard who was interviewed on camera said there was no security breach in relation to the staffer who was alleged to have committed the sexual assault on Brittany Higgins. Now, the Government says that staffer was terminated for a security breach. What was the security breach?</p> <p>Prime Minister: I'm happy to take you through that. On the other issue, Katharine, this has been a terribly difficult month. I was shocked and appalled when I learnt of the situation involving Brittany Higgins. And I have been shocked and appalled by all of the other matters that have come forward since. But as the month has progressed and as I have engaged with so many women, what has become the issue, and rightly, is that this is not just about the terrible things that have happened to one woman in this place. We moved immediately to start addressing issues around that particular case but this is far bigger than that and I think that is the voice that has arisen over the course of this past month. This was a shout about what is happening across Australia, not just the specific events. If we were to just continue to focus on the events that happen in this place - and we will, and must, as I said - there is something much bigger here that has been illuminated, thankfully, by these rather traumatic reports that have gone right across the spectrum here. We are all human beings, Katharine, and what I have sought to do today is just be very honest with people. Please don't think that these events haven't created great turmoil for me over the course of the past month. At the same time, as the Prime Minister, when I am dealing with many other issues at the same time, also very significant, whether it is floods or vaccines or COVID pandemics, international issues, Australians also expect me to be focusing on those as well. So that is my honest answer. It is processed, I have heard, I have listened and I will have a lot more to say</p>
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		<p><i>about this in the next month about further action. But today is not a day for me to list out a list of further actions. I've listed some in response to direct questions. Today, Australian women in particular, but Australians more broadly because it is not just Australian women who have identified this over the past month, Australians need to know that this place has heard them and that I have heard them and I want to assure you that I have. Sorry, on the other matter. I did see that interview last night. Obviously the security guard in question doesn't have the full information about this case and other contributing incidents that preceded this case. Senator Reynolds has previously confirmed to the Senate there was a security breach involving unauthorised access to her office and I have been advised this followed an earlier security breach by the male staff member that related to the handling of classified documents in what is clearly a highly sensitive portfolio area. Consequently, this was considered serious misconduct in relation to the statements of standards for ministerial staff. So in other words, he had some form when it came to the security issues regarding that office and this was the final straw. Obviously, the security guard in question would not have been familiar with those aspects. We are dealing with an office that had and was dealing with quite sensitive material. It was the Defence Industry Minister's office at the time and so there was some prior issues here and this final event was the one that triggered his dismissal...</i></p>
26 March 2021	Prime Minister: Press conference	<p><i>JOURNALIST: There has been a lot of talk about what's happened [referring to Brittany Higgins]. What are you going to do to move forward now?</i></p> <p><i>PRIME MINISTER: Well, let me tell you what we've already done. Initially it was about getting the counselling support for those who needed it in relation to any incident that occurred. And we've already put that service in place for staff, that's already happened, that was the first thing we did.</i></p> <p><i>The second we did is we got all the parties together and we've set up the multi-party inquiry to look at how the systems and process can better support people in these situations. As well as also how do we deal with complaints that may not extend to things that are criminal in nature? Which in Brittany's case that certainly not what's involved and those matters are ultimately best dealt with by the police, as they should be. And after two years I'm very pleased that that matter is now before the police.</i></p>

		<p><i>The other thing though is how do we deal with harassment claims or allegations or complaints and how they are better handled within the Australian parliament. For members and senators of all parties, because I don't think anyone is suggesting that this is an issue that is confined to any one side of politics. That's certainly not my experience. And I know that's not the experience of the people who work at Parliament House. And so it's important that we get that process right.</i></p> <p><i>The deputy secretary of my department is coming back to me very soon. With a report on how we can get such a complaints process in place even sooner than that.</i> So we don't have to wait until the sex discrimination commissioner's enquiry is finished, which is much later this year. We need such a process much sooner than that, and that was one of the first things I initiated soon after Brittany took her story public.</p> <p><i>There's a lot more, as I said in the parliament this week we will be responding to Respect at Work enquiry before the budget...</i></p>
25 May 2021	Prime Minister: Media statement upon Government receiving the Consultation Report.	<p><i>On 16 February 2021, I commissioned Ms Stephanie Foster PSM, Deputy Secretary, Governance in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, to undertake a report into the procedures and processes relating to serious incidents in the parliamentary workplace.</i></p> <p><i>I asked Ms Foster to consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• The procedures and processes involved in identifying and reporting a serious incident, particularly assault or sexual assault;</i> <i>• Steps that can be taken to ensure the processes of reporting and responses to serious incidents are able to be made independent from the employer;</i> <i>• Recommendations on how to ensure that all reporting and responses to serious incidents are driven by a principle of providing empowerment to the victims; and</i> <i>• Recommendations on how to ensure that the services and support that are provided to a victim are timely, effective, and ongoing.</i> <p><i>Initially, Ms Foster provided advice to me on measures that required urgent implementation to address some of these issues. This included the establishment of a 24/7, independent, confidential and trauma-informed phone</i></p>

		<p><i>support line for all staff and parliamentarians (1800 APH SPT).</i></p> <p><i>Last night, Ms Foster provided her final report which has made a number of significant findings that address gaps in existing procedures and processes when it comes to responding to serious incidents, providing support for those impacted by them, and of a preventative nature.</i></p> <p><i>Her proposals and recommendations seek to ensure that processes are independent, provide empowerment to victims, and provide timely, effective and ongoing support.</i></p> <p><i>Beyond measures already put in place, her recommendations include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Implementation of a face-to-face education program helping managers and staff understand their obligations in relation to a safe and respectful workplace, and to recognise and respond appropriately to serious incidents or patterns of behaviour in the workplace. Work on this program is well underway.</i> <i>• Development of an independent, confidential, complaints mechanism for serious incidents. This body of work is more detailed and complex and will require consultation across the Parliament.</i> <p><i>I intend to take this report to Cabinet and respond to the recommendations on behalf of the Government. Following this, I will seek to engage with all parties and parliamentarians to implement the response.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Foster's deliberations and her report have been designed deliberately to come forward with concrete steps. Throughout this process she has worked closely with the Sex Discrimination Commissioner Ms Kate Jenkins. I hope that this report will assist the Commissioner as part of her review into longer term cultural and systemic issues.</i></p> <p><i>I thank Ms Foster for her report and I look forward to working with others to ensure lasting reform is achieved on these important issues.</i></p>
4 June 2021	Minister Birmingham: Media release upon release of the Final Report.	<p><i>The Government has today released the consultation report provided by Stephanie Foster PSM into the processes and procedures relating to serious incidents in the parliamentary workplace.</i></p> <p><i>This report has made some significant findings and recommendations to improve how serious incidents are prevented and dealt with in the parliamentary workplace.</i></p>

		<p><i>For example, the report identified that there was a significant gap is the absence of readily accessible, independent, trauma-informed services. We have already taken steps to address this, by the introduction of a dedicated 24/7 support line, 1800 274 778.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, work is already well underway to implement face-to-face education and support for parliamentarians and their staff, which will seek to create positive workplace cultures that help to prevent, identify and respond to serious incidents in the workplace.</i></p> <p><i>The other critical recommendation in the report was the development of a trusted, independent complaints mechanism. This body of work is complex, however consultation across the Parliament will commence immediately.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Foster has engaged experts in drafting her report, including Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins. Ms Foster's recommendations provide for implementation of important reforms ahead of the receipt of Commissioner Jenkins' comprehensive review later this year.</i></p> <p><i>I will now work with Ms Foster to provide briefings across Parliament on the report. The Government looks forward to Ms Foster bringing back a final report, informed by those briefings, as soon as possible.</i></p> <p><i>The Government thanks Ms Foster for her report and now looks forward to working together with Members and Senators from across the political spectrum to make the changes we need to ensure parliamentary workplaces are a safe, supportive and respectful.</i></p> <p><i>The report is available here.</i></p>
26 July 2021	Prime Minister: Media statement upon release of the Final Report.	<p><i>The Government has today agreed to adopt all ten recommendations of the final report by Stephanie Foster PSM into the processes and procedures relating to serious incidents in the parliamentary workplace.</i></p> <p><i>Every Australian has a right to feel and to be safe at work.</i></p> <p><i>The report has made some significant findings and recommendations to improve how serious incidents are prevented and dealt with in the parliamentary workplace.</i></p> <p><i>The final report incorporates feedback from consultations with the opposition, minor parties, independents and staff, including proposing options for Parliament to mandate training for parliamentarians.</i></p>

		<p><i>We have already taken steps to make the workplace safer and to help prevent, identify and respond to serious incidents in the workplace. For example, earlier this year we established a dedicated 24/7 support line, 1800 274 778, for staff who have experienced serious incidents in the workplace.</i></p> <p><i>An independent complaints mechanism for serious incidents in the Parliamentary workplace will be established. This mechanism will be overseen by the Parliamentary Service Commissioner and will apply to incidents from the commencement of the current term of Parliament.</i></p> <p><i>The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet will work with the Parliamentary Service Commissioner to stand-up this mechanism within the next six weeks. The Government will work with the Speaker, the President and other parliamentary parties to operationalise the independent complaints mechanism.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, we have been piloting a face-to-face training program for parliamentarians and their staff. This training will be rolled-out widely from September of this year. It will be mandatory for all Coalition Ministers and staff, and it is expected that all other parliamentarians and their staff will undertake this training when it is available to them.</i></p> <p><i>Parliamentarians are answerable to their constituents and therefore the Government agrees with Ms Foster's recommendation that a public register would instil confidence that Parliamentarians were undertaking the necessary actions. The Government will work with the opposition, minor parties and independents to develop a public register of Parliamentarians who have undertaken the training.</i></p> <p><i>Ms Foster's recommendations provide for implementation of important reforms ahead of the receipt of Sex Discrimination Commissioner Jenkins' independent review into Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces later this year.</i></p> <p><i>The Government thanks Ms Foster for her report and now looks forward to working together with Members and Senators from across the political spectrum to make the changes we need to ensure parliamentary workplaces are safe, supportive and respectful.</i></p> <p><i>Full details will be available at: https://pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/pmc/review-parliamentary-workplace-responding-serious-incidents</i></p>
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26 July 2021	Minister Birmingham: Press conference upon release of Final Report	<p>Simon Birmingham: Thanks very much for coming today. There are a couple of matters I'd like to touch on. Firstly, to welcome the finalisation and public release of the review into parliamentary workplaces completed by the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Stephanie Foster. I welcome very much Ms Foster's report. The Government intends to act upon all of the recommendations in this Foster's report. We take very seriously the need to ensure that workplaces across Australia's Parliament are as safe and respectful as possible. This report provides opportunities for us to enhance training available to Members of Parliament and staff to ensure the creation of a serious incidents team and response unit to investigate serious issues of harassment or bullying and ensure impartial, proper processes are followed. It's not the end of the matter, though, the important work being undertaken by Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins, is ongoing. We look forward to the finalisation of Commissioner Jenkins' work, which has got more time and more ability to consult more widely to bring further expertise to the table and to build upon the recommendations of Ms Foster. And I encourage all of those current and former parliamentary staff, current and former members of parliament and others who have worked in parliamentary workplaces to engage with Commissioner Jenkins and to make submissions and participate in her review to ensure that it can be as thorough as possible.</p> <p>Journalist: Senator, just on the Foster report to begin with. That reporting and response reform that's required. What is that going to look like and how will the government guarantee it'll be independent?</p> <p>Simon Birmingham: So what Stephanie Foster has recommended in relation to the approach to serious incidents, complaints, handling and resolution is that a process be put in place with Parliamentary Services Commissioner and the Parliamentary Services Commissioner does not report to the government or a government minister, but instead to the Presiding Officers of the Parliament. So it provides a detachment, if you like, from the process of government and an independence associated with the presiding officers. That we put in place, arrangements that we provide for full confidentiality, proper process, natural justice to apply in the investigation of complaints, but ultimately also processes that parliament can consider where if issues</p>
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Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham

Minister for Finance
Leader of the Government in the Senate
Senator for South Australia

Senator the Hon Scott Ryan
President of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr President

I write with regard to Senate Order for Production of Documents No. 1034 moved by Senator Gallagher and agreed by the Senate on 24 February 2021, on the matter of reviews being conducted by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in response to an alleged sexual assault at Parliament House in March 2019.

While it would not be appropriate to reveal formal requests from the Prime Minister for advice from his Department that are for the deliberations of Cabinet, the Prime Minister has advised me that he has asked for the following processes to be undertaken by his Department:

1. Mr Philip Gaetjens, Secretary, to verify the advice the Prime Minister has received from his Office about when his staff became aware of the alleged sexual assault at Parliament House, including checking relevant phone records, taking into account matters raised in the media.
2. Ms Stephanie Foster PSM, Deputy Secretary Governance, to conduct a review of whether more could be done to support staff who have been part of a serious incident as part of parliamentary employment. The review is to consider:
 - a. The procedures and processes involved in identifying and reporting a serious incident, that occurs as part of parliamentary employment;
 - b. Steps that can be taken to ensure the processes of reporting and responses to serious incidents are able to be made independent from the employer;
 - c. Recommendations on how to ensure that all reporting and responses to serious incidents are driven by a principle of providing empowerment to the victims; and
 - d. Recommendations on how to ensure that the services and support that are provided to the victim are timely, effective and ongoing.

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I trust this information is helpful to the Senate, and I will continue to engage with colleagues across the Parliament in the establishment of the multi-party independent review.

I have copied this letter to the Prime Minister and Senator Gallagher.

S22
S22
S22 Yours sincerely
S22

Simon Birmingham
Minister for Finance

25 February 2021