

STATEMENT FROM BRITTANY HIGGINS

Today I have reengaged with Australian Federal Police and will proceed with a formal complaint regarding the crime committed against me in what should be the safest building in Australia.

By publicly coming forward with my experience in Parliament House, I've sought to achieve two things.

Firstly, I want a comprehensive police investigation into what happened to me on 22/23 March 2019 and for my perpetrator to face the full force of the law.

The Australian Federal Police have made assurances to me that they will handle this matter thoroughly and transparently. I would also ask that they handle it in a timely manner as to date, I have waited a long time for justice.

Secondly, given my experience, I am determined to drive significant reform in the way the Australian Parliament handles issues of this nature and treats ministerial and parliamentary staff more generally.

I expect a truly independent investigation into how my matter was handled inside the government including offices where I worked, and other offices and parties that had knowledge of my circumstances.

I believe that getting to the bottom of what happened to me and how the system failed me is critical to creating a new framework for political staff that ensures genuine cultural change and restores the trust of staff.

In addition to an independent investigation into what happened to me, I demand a significant review into the conditions under which ministerial and parliamentary staff are employed and how we can do better.

Political advisers have very few protections, resources and confidential reporting mechanisms to address any workplace issues. They are not public servants and work in an extremely high-pressure environment. Too often, a toxic workplace culture can emerge that enables inappropriate conduct and this is exacerbated by the disparity in the power dynamics.

How ministerial and parliamentary staff are treated is a bipartisan issue that impacts staff from across the political spectrum and must be treated as such.

The Prime Minister has repeatedly told the Parliament that I should be given 'agency' going forward. I don't believe that agency was provided to me over the past two years but I seize it now and have advised the Prime Minister's Office that I expect a voice in framing the scope and terms of reference for a new and significant review into the conditions for all ministerial and parliamentary staff. It is important that the reform is real and drives change beyond dealing with just what happened to me, and how the system let me down.

From the outset, I have driven by my desire to ensure that no other person would have to go through the trauma that I experienced during my time in Parliament House.

I was failed repeatedly, but I now have my voice, and I am determined to use to ensure that this is never allowed to happen to another member of staff again.

This has been a very difficult and trying week for me, my partner and my family. I would ask please that my privacy is respected as I now deal with the processes I have outlined in this statement. I do not intend to make any further public comment at this time.

ENDS