




Speech By
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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Federal Parliament, Workplace Culture

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.40 pm): The last few months have been traumatic for Australian women. Last night's revelations that men employed by the Australian Public Service have been performing lewd acts on women MPs' desks only further added to the horror and shock that we have all been feeling. Yesterday it was revealed that male coalition advisers were performing solo sex acts in Parliament House and swapping photos with colleagues. Why would these men do this? Did they think the woman MP was hot? It was clearly a power trip for them to hang their penises out over a woman's desk and try to show off that they consider themselves more powerful than her. It is absolutely grotesque. However, women experience this kind of male power trip behaviour all the time and I believe all of the women who have come forward and told their story are courageous.

After these shocking allegations were aired it was confirmed the staff member in question has been sacked. The woman MP was offered a token gesture of support, just like Brittany Higgins was given a brochure. However, Nationals MP Michelle Landry said that while the behaviour was unacceptable, she felt 'bad' for the sacked man.

An honourable member: What?

Ms LAUGA: What? It shows that so many people in Canberra, including the federal member for Capricornia, just do not get it. This morning the member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry, the assistant minister for children and families, said—

I was horrified when I saw that last night. I think there is a real behaviour problem in this place and that we have to address it.

I am certainly strict about what goes on in my office. I don't think people should be here after hours unless they are working and there needs to be a strict code on that.

In saying that, the young fellow concerned was a good worker and he loved the place. I feel bad for him about this, but it's unacceptable behaviour by anyone and it should not happen in workplaces like this. This is the federal parliament of Australia and people should behave themselves.

The minute she started referring to this man as a 'good worker' is when the member for Capricornia lost all credibility. It is all well and good to say, 'I'm appalled,' but she said, 'In saying that,' and turned her horror into an excuse. Why is she defending him? She has effectively defended the indefensible. She clearly knows him.

It is all well and good to care about the mental health of colleagues. I challenge whether the member for Capricornia even knows the mental health of the perpetrators. Did she call them? The standard we walk past is the standard we accept, and the member for Capricornia's comments demonstrate the National Party's deep feelings of just brushing these matters off. She is defending the disrespect of women. She is brushing off and defending the disrespect of the parliament of Australia. She is defending the disrespect of a woman elected democratically by her electorate. These acts showed a deep disrespect for the people of Australia, and the comments of the member for Capricornia that, 'This man was a good worker,' and that he loved the place are just absolutely deplorable.

It is just like last week. When asked about the March 4 Justice where tens of thousands of Australians marched to send a message to Canberra, the member for Capricornia called it a witch-hunt. I believe that when politicians speak off the cuff, as the member for Capricornia has been doing a lot lately, they often say how they really feel and what they really think. The member for Capricornia's comments go to the heart of how the National Party and the LNP actually feel about the treatment of women.

There is no place for disrespect of women in our parliaments, in our workplaces, on our Australian streets or in our homes. Everyone is sick of it. Women are sick of it. We are sick of the dick pics, the revenge porn, the harassment and abuse if a woman rejects a man, particularly online. We are sick of men like these who perform these lewd acts over a woman's desk at work, film it and share it. We are sick of being groped, touched up, assaulted, harassed, raped and murdered.

I say to these men: stop hiding, step up and get out. As for the member for Capricornia defending men like this, she needs to apologise or resign immediately.