




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2022

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Workplace Behaviour, Comments by Premier

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.55 pm): I will quote the Premier of the state: 'Sit in a room.' That is what the Premier said: 'Sit in a room and work it out.' I am here today to tell Queenslanders that that statement is not okay. In fact, it is shameful. I have been in this place a good while now, and I am racking my brain to recall a time that a premier of our state has said something so dismissive, so reckless and so destructive about something which is so, so serious. What was said yesterday beggars belief.

The Premier told an alleged victim of workplace bullying to sit in the same room as the alleged perpetrator to sort it out. Yes, that is what she said. Let that sink in. What is more, the alleged bully is said to have used offensive, derogatory and misogynous language. Let me remind the House that the alleged victim is our state's first female Integrity Commissioner. That is who we are talking about. The position she holds is one of the key pillars of government integrity and accountability in Queensland. Just for doing her job, she says she has been demeaned and told that she was on a witch-hunt.

I cannot repeat in this House the five words strung together which were allegedly spoken to her, but that language is not on. The alleged perpetrator who uttered those words was the Premier's hand-picked chief executive of the Public Service Commission. He fronted a press conference yesterday reading a pre-written statement. To me, in that statement it appeared the bullying continued. In that statement there was a slanderous insinuation that the Integrity Commissioner was hiding behind parliamentary privilege. What was the Integrity Commissioner meant to do? Was she supposed to mislead members of parliament when asked if she had ever been the subject of a misogynous slur?

I say this to the chief executive of the Public Service Commission: if you are going to make insinuations like that publicly, you better be prepared to face the music before parliament yourself. I would urge the chief executive to remember that there are severe penalties for misleading the parliament, though I am sure such a senior public servant would well understand.

No woman should ever be the subject of misogynous language anywhere, let alone in the workplace. Yet here we are in 2022 and this is still happening in the Queensland Public Service. Yesterday the Premier okayed it; that is what she did. It was an abject failure of leadership. Even on the most human level, the Premier failed to show any level of compassion or empathy. She failed to even look like she even cared about bullying at the highest levels of the Queensland Public Service.

We know that the Premier sees herself as blameless in every situation. However, when one is so willing to blame someone else for their own problems, eventually they will end up blaming the wrong person. In her effort to try to just brush away the latest chapter of her government's own integrity crisis as some inconsequential workplace bickering, the Premier got it hopelessly wrong. It cannot be understated how damaging these words were.

Think about the message it sends. How should women across Queensland deal with misogynistic slurs made against them? They should sit in a room with the accused? Even if you take gender out of it, it is still appalling. Think about the effect of those words on any public servant who has been the subject of workplace bullying. What are they to do and how are they to feel? Are they to just sit in a room with a bully, too?

People in this place know that I am a survivor of domestic violence. I am proud to stand on my record of standing up for women who have suffered at the hands of this scourge. I have worked with groups across the sector for long enough to know that when they call out comments as damaging and asked for the comments to be retracted it is because they really mean it. That is because there are real consequences. As Michelle Beattie of Hearts of Purple put it, 'It could deter women from coming forward.' I table the statement from Hearts of Purple today.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 15 March 2022, from the CEO, Hearts of Purple, Ms Michelle Beattie, regarding comments made by the Premier and Minister for the Olympics, Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, in the media [285](#).

The Premier and her Public Service Commission chief executive have some serious questions to answer after yesterday. I think the Premier should take some of her own advice. She should sit down—but her and her alone. In private, she should consider the effect of her words yesterday on women across the state. Once the Premier has reflected on that, she should stand up and apologise.