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From: Gaetjens, Phil
Sent: Friday, 19 February 2021 4:28 PM
To: PMC ALL Staff
Subject: Support Available - please be advised the content of this email may be distressing [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Colleagues

The allegations by and media reporting on former Ministerial staffer Brittany Higgins are very concerning.

I want to re-emphasise, following our all staff meeting on Tuesday, that if you are feeling at all unsafe in the workplace or at home, I encourage you to get help and support. It is very important to me, as the accountable authority in the Department, that you feel safe here at PM&C. Help is available.

If you have an issue in the workplace on which you would like to seek advice or disclose, please email s47E(d) or call the Unit directly on s 47E(d). Your matter will be handled discretely, confidentially and sensitively.

If you or someone you know needs support, you can contact 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732 or www.1800respect.org.au) which is the national confidential sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling service. You can contact 1800RESPECT 24 hours a day for specialist support. If you are a husband, partner, or father who needs help, you can contact MensLine Australia on 1300 789 978 or via their website for round the clock counselling.

You can also go to the police. And in the case of an emergency, please always use 000.

I also understand that this will be upsetting for some and you may need time away from the office. In such circumstances I encourage you to discuss leave options with your manager in the first instance.

Phil

Philip Gaetjens

Secretary

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

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From: Foster, Stephanie
Sent: Tuesday, 16 March 2021 2:35 PM
To: Rush, Peter
Subject: FW: Higgins Statement [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: 210219 - STATEMENT FROM BRITTANY HIGGINS.docx

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Stephanie Foster PSM
Deputy Secretary Governance
Head APS Reform
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

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From: s22
Sent: Tuesday, 9 March 2021 7:26 PM
To: Foster, Stephanie
Subject: FW: Higgins Statement [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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From: s22
Sent: Friday, 19 February 2021 6:30 PM
To: Foster, Stephanie s22 ; Moran, Celeste s22
Subject: Higgins Statement [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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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