

6.5 SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Submitting Councillor: Anjalee de Silva

MOTION

That Council:

1. *notes the Victorian Auditor-General's recent report "Sexual Harassment in Local Government" and its key findings that:*
 - *councils are not providing workplaces that are free from sexual harassment;*
 - *more than one in four survey respondents said that they had experienced workplace sexual harassment in the last 12 months, including 30% of Councillors, 30% of women, 48% of LGBTQIA+ respondents, and 41% of respondents with a disability;*
 - *councils rarely engage staff in meaningful conversations about sexual harassment and its drivers; and*
 - *sexual harassment was found to be more prevalent in metropolitan councils;*
2. *accepts the recommendations of the Auditor-General contained in the report;*
3. *acknowledges the work that Officers have already completed in response to the recommendations of the Auditor-General contained in the report, including a gap analysis in relation to current policies and processes; and*
4. *requests that Officers provide recommendations to Council on potential further improvements to its policies and processes, with a view to Council:*
 - a. *further providing a workplace with zero tolerance for sexual harassment and appropriate redress for victims of sexual harassment; and*
 - b. *seeking to be an exemplar Council in this area, so that Council's focus and response on sexual harassment in local government is consistent with best practice standards across the local government sector and amongst Australian workplaces more generally; and*
5. *Conveys its broad and unwavering commitment to continuing to support any measures recommended by Officers to address sexual harassment in the workplace.*

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

The report *Sexual Harassment in Local Government* ('Report') was publicly released by the Victorian Auditor-General in December 2020. The Auditor-General's Office examined whether councils provide their staff and councillors with workplaces free from sexual harassment. It looked at:

- the prevalence and nature of sexual harassment in councils;
- councils' policies, training and communication; and
- the effectiveness of councils' complaints handling.

While Monash was not one of the Councils audited, the advice and recommendations contained in the Report are partly based on a state-wide survey of almost 10,000 council employees and Councillors from across 75 councils.¹

FINANCIAL

This motion has no financial impact to Council.

¹ <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-12/20201209-Sexual-Harassment-LG-report.pdf>