

**SOCIAL MEDIA — OFFENSIVE COMMENTARY**

*Statement*

**HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural)** [6.41 pm]: I rise to speak on a matter that is perhaps in a similar vein to that which Hon Kate Doust spoke on earlier. I want to share an incident that I experienced recently when I commented on social media, thanking the Prime Minister for some investment that he had made in this state. As happens in social media, I got a reply from a male person who said, “Sandra Carr ... get off your knees. Burney and the others will get cranky.” It got me wondering about what kind of a person would make a comment like that. I decided to go to that person’s profile and have a look. They had locked their profile, as the kind of person who makes those comments does to avoid responsibility for those things, but it indicated that he was a graduate of Edith Cowan University—ironically a university named after the first woman to become a member of Parliament in the country. Edith Cowan advocated for women’s rights, the rights of a range of people in education and the right for women to be admitted to study law—all those important things that allowed people to experience a full range of opportunities and safety and respect in the community. His profile also indicated that he was currently studying at another university. Rather than not take action, I wrote to the vice-chancellors of both those educational institutions and mentioned to them that I had experienced this from someone who purports to be a graduate of Edith Cowan University and who is currently studying at another.

I am very pleased to report that the vice-chancellor of ECU, Professor Steve Chapman, wrote back to me yesterday. They had located and identified that student and although they acknowledged that there would be no legal repercussions, they had taken the time to write to that person and remind them of their obligations in political discussion and political debate. I was particularly grateful to Professor Steve Chapman for not trivialising the comments made.

I cannot begin to tell members about the number of comments that women in leadership get on social media. They are often used to sexualise, trivialise, belittle and undermine us. I have been called a prostitute and I have been called “loose”. I have received all sorts of comments like that on social media purely to try to undermine my credibility. I can tell members right now that from this moment on, any time I see that happening, I will come for that person. I will make sure that they are held accountable for their words and that they are at least forced to face the responsibility for the words that they choose to put out in public. Secondly, it demonstrates to people that we as a society share the responsibility for demonstrating and reminding people where the boundaries are and what is acceptable. If people cannot see that those kinds of comments that sexualise people are linked to the aggression and violence against women, they are kidding themselves. We have to address them at every opportunity, not just when those who are politicians cop it very publicly, but every time we see it and at every opportunity. I implore everyone in the room or anyone who happens to be listening to please, please do that. It is so important. Thank you.