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**Hon Simone McGurk MLA**  
Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests;  
Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services

Our ref: 74-19774

The Hon Libby Mettam MLA  
Chair  
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee  
[lacdjsc@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:lacdjsc@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Dear Ms Mettam

As the Minister for Women's Interests I welcome the opportunity to provide this submission to the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee's inquiry into sexual harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry.

Sexual violence and harassment in the workplace is completely unacceptable, however it remains pervasive throughout many industries. It is not a women's issue, but a societal and safety issue that everyone must take responsibility for eliminating.

The WA State Government is steadfast in its position that sexual harassment is driven by gender inequality and requires a dedicated whole of community commitment to understand, prevent and address sexual harassment in all workplaces. Strengthening legislative and regulatory frameworks to enhance protections against sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination in the workplace is an important aspect of ensuring employees' rights to safe workplaces and progressing women's safety and economic security.

The WA State Government is of the view that recommendations of the Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report form an important part of the broader response to harassment and violence in Western Australian workplaces. I would urge the committee to draw on the significant body of work that the Sex Discrimination Commissioner undertook in delivering the Respect@Work report when considering this issue.

It is vital that we understand the complexity of gender inequality and how this manifests into sexual violence and harassment. Responses to sexual violence need to be tailored to each industry, therefore it's vital that the perspectives of industry and victims are taken into account through this inquiry process.

However, it's important to acknowledge that sexual violence is not unique to the resources industry. While Respect@Work demonstrated appalling rates of sexual harassment in the resources sector, there are a number of other industries with high rates of sexual harassment. Governments, community and individuals must all take responsibility to eradicate violence against women in all areas of our society.



In the past decade, we've seen a significant increase in reports of family and domestic violence driven by better community awareness and growing victim confidence in responses. I believe the issues of sexual violence and harassment are now on a similar trajectory. This is not a new issue, but we have reached a point where the wider community is no longer willing to tolerate or turn a blind eye to it.

If more people feel comfortable sharing their stories, and come forward to report sexual violence and harassment, then that is a good indication that our society is doing a better job of raising awareness. Creating reporting options that are victim-focused and improving our responses to reporting of harassment and assault are key steps in this process to ensuring better outcomes.

As the Minister for Women's Interests, I'm determined to continue pushing for solutions to this insidious problem across all industries, and for all women and victims. The WA State Government is strongly committed to providing safe workplaces not only for public sector employees, but for all employees across WA, and that women are safe and free from violence, discrimination, and harassment in their homes, in the workplace and within the community.

I look forward to the outcome of this committee inquiry.

Yours sincerely

HON SIMONE McGURK MLA

**MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION; WOMEN'S INTERESTS;  
PREVENTION OF FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; COMMUNITY SERVICES**

13 August 2021