

# **DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH**

**1 December 2021**

## **Update – Sexual Consent Amendment Bill**

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

Before I start my substantive speech – I wanted to acknowledge in the Assembly that the Independent review titled: Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces (2021) conducted by the Australian Human Rights Commission and led by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins has just been released. And the word trending on Twitter to describe the findings of this report is ‘Appalling’, with the report finding one in three people in Parliament house had experienced sexual harassment, 77% witnessed or experienced bullying, and then there were those that were sexually assaulted in their workplace. These findings are appalling. And as we are days into the #16Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence against women – It is important that we continue our activism well past the 16 days, and well past the boundaries of Parliament House.

As this is the last sitting week for the Assembly this year, I want to provide an update on my Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2021.

In June this year I released a draft Exposure Bill for public comment.

Sexual violence has been an issue that has very much been at the forefront of public debate in Australia since the beginning of this year. One of the pivotal calls for change is to reform laws to implement a communicative, or affirmative, model of consent.

My Bill proposes exactly that.

Earlier this month, New South Wales passed affirmative consent legislation in a Bill which is very similar to mine. Also last month, Victoria announced its intention to introduce an affirmative model of consent in 2022.

I am very passionate, and remain committed, to seeing this happen in the ACT.

Over the four-week period of public consultation on my draft Bill, I received detailed submissions from 14 groups and individuals and have subsequently met with many key stakeholders to discuss matters in more detail.

This year Minister Berry established the Sexual Assault Prevention and response Program and I have presented to its Working Group on Law Reform.

An overarching Steering Committee to this Working Group – led by community and sector experts – is providing a holistic approach to the prevention and response of sexual assault in the ACT.

I believe this coordinated and collaborative approach is critical to deliver the best outcomes for our community, and I am committed to the process. I eagerly await the recommendations from the Working Group.

I wish to assure the community and stakeholders that I intend to bring my Bill forward at the first available opportunity in 2022 after considering and making any necessary changes. I acknowledge concern in the community and frustration about lack of affirmative consent laws in the ACT, but I want to provide assurances that things are moving and that when my Bill is tabled – the community can be confident that it has gone through an incredibly rigorous process to ensure that the Bill has all likelihood of passing. Ultimately the goal is that we have robust, comprehensive legislation that causes no harm - and that is what I believe this process will achieve.

To victim-survivors in the ACT – I am working for you. This is for you. And we are nearly there.

**Ends**