

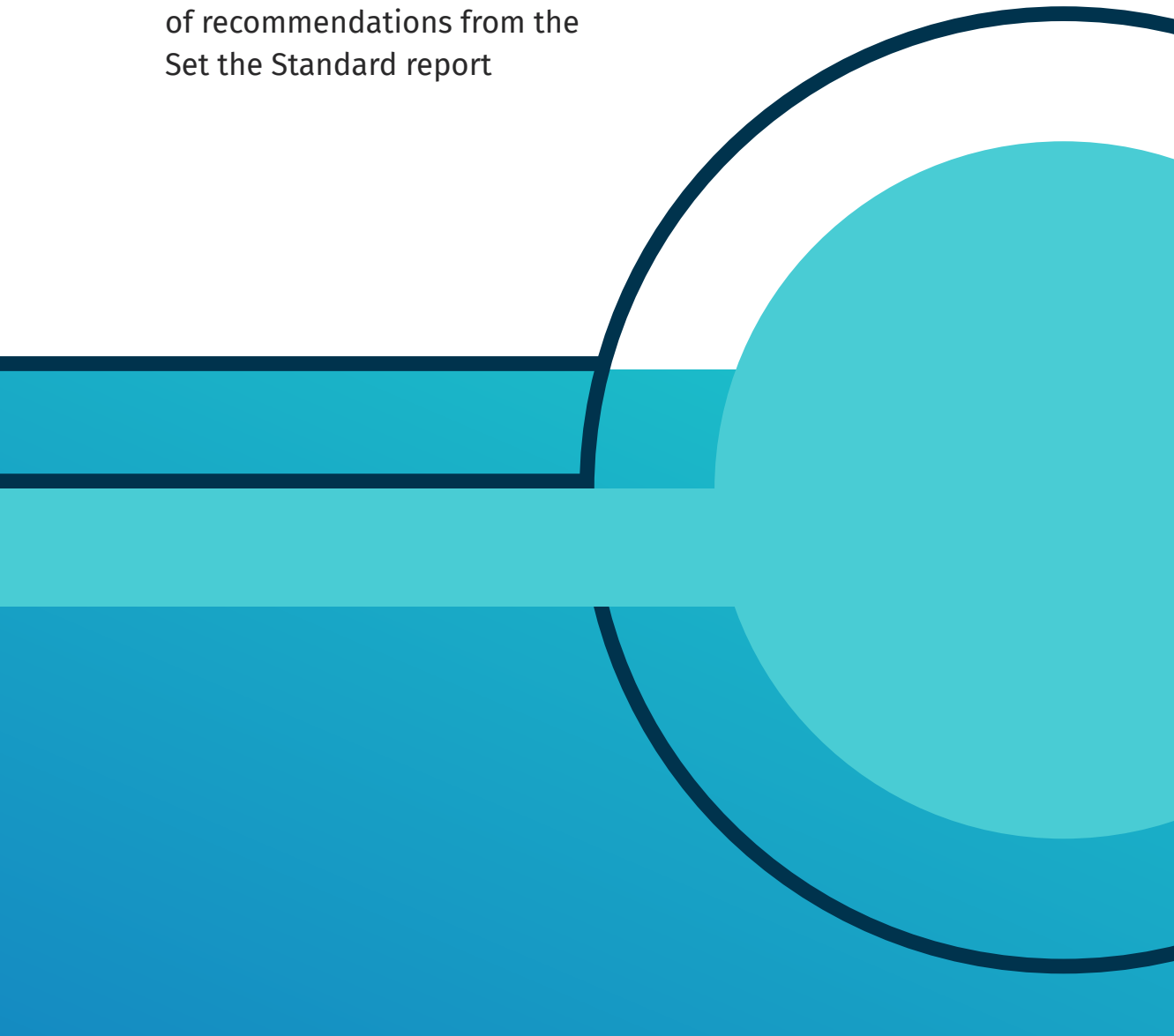


**Australian Government**

**Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce**

# 2022 **Annual Report**

Update on the implementation  
of recommendations from the  
Set the Standard report





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# Contents

- Foreword from the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce.....1**
  - Progress snapshot.....2
- Leadership.....3**
  - Statement of Acknowledgement.....3
  - Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce.....6
  - Implementation Group.....7
- Diversity, equality and inclusion.....8**
  - Supporting access and respect.....8
  - Data collection and reporting.....9
  - Supporting diversity.....9
- Systems to support performance.....15**
  - Human resources support and administration .....15
  - Legislative amendments.....17
  - MoP(S) Act Review.....17
- Standards, reporting and accountability .....19**
  - Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards.....19
  - Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission.....20
  - Parliamentary Workplace Support Service.....21
- Safety and wellbeing.....24**
  - Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service.....24
  - Parliamentary business.....24
  - Work health and safety arrangements .....25
- Status of each recommendation.....26**

# Foreword from the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce

The Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce presents the first annual report on the implementation of recommendations from the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*.

The *Set the Standard* report highlighted an unacceptably high rate of people, particularly women, in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces have experienced bullying, sexual harassment, or actual or attempted sexual assault. The report's 28 recommendations are designed to support everyone in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces to perform at their best and bring these workplaces into line with the standards expected of all Australian workplaces.

The Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce is overseeing the implementation of the recommendations and is committed to bringing about meaningful change to ensure that Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces are models of safety and respect. This annual report complements our regular published progress updates.

Despite a hiatus during the 2022 Federal Election period, there has been significant progress made throughout 2022 with many reforms implemented in full or in part, while work to implement other reforms is well advanced.

We thank those who have contributed to these important reforms and look forward to continuing to oversee the implementation throughout 2023.



**Back row (Left to right): Senator Larissa Waters, Ms Zali Steggall OAM MP, Hon Sussan Ley MP, Senator Perin Davey, Ms Sharon Claydon MP  
Front row (Left to right): Senator the Hon Don Farrell, Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, Ms Kerri Hartland, Senator the Hon Jane Hume**

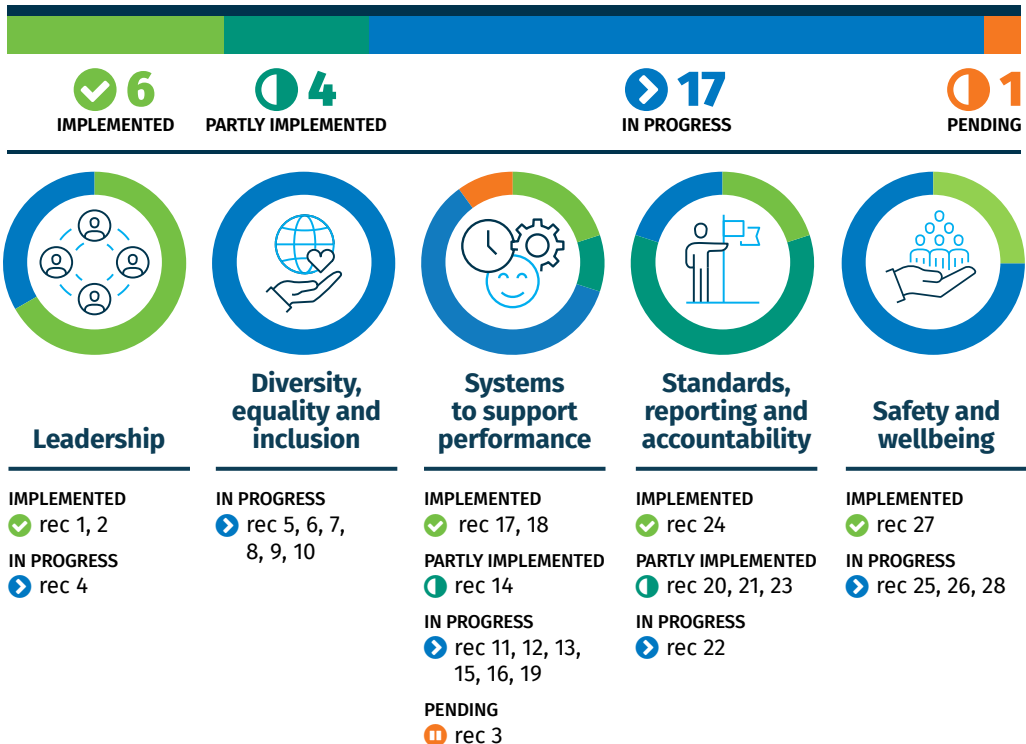
## Progress snapshot

The [Set the Standard report](#) categorised the 28 recommendations of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner by five key outcomes. The five key outcomes support the structure of this first annual report on progress, and include:

- Leadership
- Diversity, equality and inclusion
- Systems to support performance
- Standards, reporting and accountability
- Safety and wellbeing.

Responsibility for implementing the 28 recommendations is shared across Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces, namely Government, the Presiding Officers and parliamentary departments, political parties (including parliamentarians and senior employees), the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards and the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce. The lead authority for each recommendation is detailed at the end of this report. Preparatory work has occurred where possible where progress of some recommendations is dependent on the implementation of other recommendations. Of the 28 recommendations, 6 have been implemented, 4 partly implemented, and 17 are in progress (noting many will be ongoing measures). This report details the achievements to date. The Taskforce's published [Implementation Tracker](#) will provide further ongoing detail.

### 28 RECOMMENDATIONS



# Leadership

**DESIRED OUTCOME:** We want leaders at all levels to prioritise a safe and respectful culture, set clear expectations and model safe and respectful behaviour



## RECOMMENDATION

## STATUS

1 Statement of Acknowledgement	✓ Implemented
2 Institutional leadership	✓ Implemented
4 Individual leadership	▶ In progress

## Statement of Acknowledgement

On the first sitting day of 2022, 8 February 2022, the Presiding Officers of the 46<sup>th</sup> Parliament acknowledged the harm caused by bullying, sexual harassment, and sexual assault in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces and committed to action (recommendation 1).

### Statement of Acknowledgement: 8 February 2022

*In the final sitting week of 2021 the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces was published by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins.*

*Today, on the first sitting day of 2022, we deliver this Statement on behalf of the Parliamentary Cross-Party Leadership Taskforce recommended by Commissioner Jenkins and as a reflection of the Parliament. We acknowledge the unacceptable history of workplace bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces.*

*This issue is of the greatest importance and the responsibility of all people who work in this place. Any bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault is unacceptable and wrong. We say sorry.*

*Every workplace should be safe and respectful. This place and its members are committed to bringing about lasting and meaningful change to both culture and practice within our workplaces. We have failed to provide this in the past. We today declare our personal and collective commitment to make the changes required. We will aspire, as we should, to set the standard for the nation.*

*We thank all of those who participated in the Jenkins Review, acknowledging everyone who came forward to tell us of their experiences. We also acknowledge the many others who could not or did not participate but who may have experienced misconduct. We know that your experiences have had profound and far-reaching impacts on your lives. We have listened and heard you, and we accept your calls for change.*

*This Parliament should serve as a model workplace for our nation. Only by creating the best workplace will this Parliament attract the best people our country has to offer. And only by attracting the best our country has to offer, and listening to the communities we represent, will we deliver the high standards that our country deserves.*

*Parliamentary workers feel pride in working for their country, and the privilege and honour of making a difference for the Australian people. However, for far too many, it has not been safe or respectful. The Jenkins Review proposes an ambitious program of reform to ensure Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces meet the highest standards. We are fully committed to working across the Parliament to implement all of these recommendations within the timeframes proposed by Commissioner Jenkins.*

*We have started to act. Last year, we established a new independent complaints process and began providing trauma-informed support for people who have experienced serious incidents working in the Parliament. Members, Senators and staff have undertaken professional workplace training.*

*Parliamentarians must uphold the highest standards and be accountable for delivering required actions. We know that cultural change has to come from the top – it has to be role modelled and championed by all of us.*

*While we know we cannot undo the harm that has already been done, we are committed to acknowledging the mistakes of the past and continuing to build safe and respectful workplaces.*

The Presiding Officers of the 47<sup>th</sup> Parliament recommitted to the implementation of the recommendations on the first anniversary of the tabling of the *Set the Standard* report.

## **Joint Statement: 30 November 2022**

*On the first anniversary of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's *Set the Standard Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces (Set the Standard report)*, as Presiding Officers, we again, acknowledge the history of unacceptable behaviour in Parliament House and recommit the Parliament to positive change.*

*The *Set the Standard* report highlighted that a high rate of people, particularly women, in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces have experienced bullying,*

*sexual harassment, or actual or attempted sexual assault. This is unacceptable. We restate the commitment of the Parliament to making lasting change to ensure this does not continue.*

*We all have an ongoing responsibility to creating a workplace that attracts and supports the best people our country has to offer.*

*The Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce is leading meaningful change within the Parliament, and we commend their commitment in understanding and addressing the issues that have been ignored for too long.*

*Since February, there has already been significant progress in implementing the 28 recommendations of the report:*

- Legislation has been amended to clarify our duties in respect of employment, antidiscrimination and work health and safety laws.*
- Proposed Codes of Conduct have been developed for parliamentarians, staff, and parliamentary workplaces.*
- Changes to the sitting calendar and hours of sitting now consider wellbeing, balance, and flexibility.*
- New parliamentarians and their staff have participated in refreshed induction processes.*
- A feasibility study into a Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service is being conducted, with plans to improve services for parliamentarians and staff including General Practitioner services, pharmaceutical and mental health supports.*
- Work is underway to improve work health and safety, accessibility for those with disability and professional support available for parliamentarians and their staff.*
- The Parliamentary Workplace Support Service has been expanded. It is already providing confidential support and advice to those in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces.*
- The Senate and House Procedure Committee are examining standing orders and conventions to improve levels of safety and respect in the Chamber and to enhance wellbeing, balance and flexibility.*

*Looking forward, some of the notable work underway includes:*

- The establishment of a new human resources function to support parliamentarians and their staff.*
- The development of new measures to support greater diversity and inclusion.*

*The framework for action set out in the Set the Standard Report is leadership, diversity and inclusion, accountability, and safety and wellbeing.*

*We all have a responsibility to display exemplary individual leadership. We all have a role to play to set the standard for an inclusive, respectful, and professional workplace here in Parliament House and across Australia.*



## Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce

The Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce was established on 3 February 2022 to oversee the implementation of the recommendations from the *Set the Standard* report (recommendation 2).

The Taskforce is a cross-party steering group to ensure a coordinated and non-partisan implementation of the recommendations. The Taskforce is led by an independent expert chair and comprises three representatives from the Government, three from the Opposition, one from the Australian Greens, and one independent. The Taskforce membership was refreshed following the 2022 Federal Election.

**Table 1: Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce membership**

Independent Chair: Ms Kerri Hartland	
46 <sup>th</sup> Parliament	47 <sup>th</sup> Parliament
Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham	Ms Sharon Claydon MP
Senator the Hon Don Farrell	Senator Perin Davey
Senator Hon Katy Gallagher	Senator the Hon Don Farrell
Hon Ben Morton MP	Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Senator the Hon Marise Payne	Senator the Hon Jane Hume
Hon Tanya Plibersek MP	Hon Sussan Ley MP
Ms Zali Steggall OAM, MP	Ms Zali Steggall OAM, MP
Senator Larissa Waters	Senator Larissa Waters

During 2022, the Taskforce met on 3 February, 28 February and 24 March prior to the Federal Election. It reconvened on 15 August, 12 September, 19 October, 15 November and 29 November. The Taskforce will continue to oversee the implementation process over 2023.

A Taskforce website was established on [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au) to communicate the work of the Taskforce and provide other relevant information to interested stakeholders. Statements from the Taskforce are published after each meeting alongside reports to track and monitor progress against each of the 28 recommendations. These progress updates highlight achievements to date, responsibilities for implementation, what is expected to happen next and when the implementation of each recommendation is expected to be complete.

To help drive cultural change, the Taskforce wrote to all Parliamentarians and *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MoP(S) Act) employees in September 2022 to reaffirm the need to ensure Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces are safe and respectful and that everyone models and champions the highest standards of

workplace behaviour and takes responsibility for discharging work health and safety obligations (recommendation 4). The [letter is published on the Taskforce website](#) and provides practical examples of how these standards of behaviour can be encouraged, for example through available training and support and advice services, and noted the formal codes of conduct under development by the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards.

The Taskforce Chair has released three newsletters to provide further progress updates and information about other initiatives of interest to those in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces. The Taskforce Chair has met regularly with other stakeholders to support the implementation of the recommendations, including:

- Monthly discussions with the Presiding Officers
- Monthly meetings with the heads of the Parliamentary departments, the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service and representatives of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and Department of Finance
- Members of Parliament, including political party leaders, whips, and other representatives
- the Sex Discrimination Commissioner
- Victim survivors
- Staff consultative committees and staff representatives
- Academics

## Implementation Group

The Taskforce is supported by an Implementation Group (recommendation 2). The Implementation Group has met fortnightly since its formation in March 2022 to progress several recommendations from the *Set the Standard* report.

The Implementation Group includes representatives from the Department of the House of Representatives, Department of the Senate, Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliamentary Budget Office, Parliamentary Workplace Support Service, Australian Human Rights Commission, Comcare, Department of Finance and PM&C. The Implementation Group is chaired by the head of a secretariat which supports both the Taskforce and Implementation Group.

# Diversity, equality and inclusion



**DESIRED OUTCOME:** We want a diverse and inclusive workplace: everyone should experience respectful behaviour as the baseline standard

## RECOMMENDATION

## STATUS

<b>5</b> Diversity among parliamentarians	➤ In progress
<b>6</b> Diversity among MoP(S) Act employees	➤ In progress
<b>7</b> Measurement and public reporting	➤ In progress
<b>8</b> Diversity and inclusion in the parliamentary departments	➤ In progress
<b>9</b> Access and inclusion	➤ In progress
<b>10</b> Everyday respect in the parliamentary chambers	➤ In progress

## Supporting access and respect

*Set the Standard* recommended a review of the physical infrastructure, policies and practices of Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces to increase accessibility and inclusion (recommendation 9), and reviews of the Standing Orders and unwritten parliamentary conventions to ensure respect in the parliamentary chambers (recommendation 10).

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Finance and parliamentary departments are developing proposals for a review of the physical infrastructure of Parliament House, and reviews of workplace policies and procedures to increase accessibility and inclusion. The Department of Parliamentary Services is reviewing the physical infrastructure within the Australian Parliament House, and the Department of Finance has conducted an internal audit on the physical infrastructure and accessibility of Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces administered by Finance and has reviewed the National Fitout Standards.

The Procedure Committees of the 47<sup>th</sup> Parliament are considering matters relating to the Standing Orders and unwritten parliamentary conventions with a view to identifying ways to improve everyday respect in parliamentary proceedings.

## Data collection and reporting

Set the Standard recommended annual reporting on the diversity characteristics of parliamentarians and MoP(S) Act employees by the proposed Office of Parliamentary Staffing and Culture (recommendation 7). The report is to analyse workforce characteristics, including diversity, for MoP(S) Act employees. Parliamentary departments are also expected to report on their workforce composition and diversity characteristics. Following consultation with MoP(S) Act staff and the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce, the Government announced that the Office of Parliamentary Staffing and Culture, which is to provide human resources support to parliamentarians and staff, will be called the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service.

Pending establishment of that new entity, scoping work with data owners across the parliamentary departments and relevant agencies has been undertaken to assess what data is already collected, how data gaps can be addressed over time and reported while maintaining the privacy of individuals. Preparatory work has also been undertaken to inform a monitoring and evaluation framework which will be progressed by the new Parliamentary Workplace Support Service, once established (recommendation 19).

The Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives have implemented changes to the respective Human Resource Management systems which enable them to capture a broader range of workforce diversity characteristics and facilitate reporting in future annual reports. The Department of Parliamentary Services was able to report on this information in its 2021-22 annual report.

## Supporting diversity

The Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce Chair wrote to the main political party leaders and executive to highlight the need to progress recommendations for a more diverse and gender-balanced parliamentarian and staff cohort within each of the parties (recommendations 5 and 6).

### Australian Labor Party

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) is committed to improving the experiences of women and people of diverse backgrounds in politics.

The ALP has a proud record on women's representation in public office. Affirmative action has been part of our rules for almost three decades.

In fact, already the Albanese Labor Government is the most diverse government in Australian history, including a record-high representation of women (52% of the Labor caucus).

In accordance with these rules, from 2025 at least 50% of ALP candidates pre-selected in held and winnable seats at all levels of Government must be women. Changes to ALP governance processes have assisted in achieving these outcomes. In 2022 all State and Territory Branches adopted the ALP National Code of Conduct and Associated Policies. This nationally consistent framework defines unacceptable behaviour relating to general conduct, sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination, and is complemented by a published Complaints Handling Process.

The Code of Conduct and Associated Policies apply to all people associated with the Party, at Party-sanctioned events.

Training for ALP members regarding these policies commenced in 2022 and will continue in 2023. Training is delivered by subject-matter experts and is designed to ensure members have a clear understanding of the Code of Conduct and Associated Policies, as well as trauma-informed practice frameworks.

## **Liberal Party of Australia**

The Liberal Party recognises the benefits of improving the diversity of the Parliament as part of making Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces more reflective of the broader Australian community.

The Liberal Party has a proud history of cultural and ethnic diversity in the Commonwealth Parliament, including with indigenous and LGBTIQ+ parliamentarians.

The includes its history of firsts in the diversity of Commonwealth parliamentarians, including the first indigenous Australian parliamentarian, first openly gay MP, and first female and indigenous Australian members of Cabinet. The first female member of the House of Representatives was a member of the Liberal Party, having first been elected as a member of the United Australia Party.

The Liberal Party is particularly focused in this term on improving gender diversity.

At the 2022 election, 31% of Liberal House of Representatives candidates were women.

Of the 15 non-Liberal seats held by less than 4%, 40% of Liberal candidates were women.

In 50% of the seats that had a retiring incumbent Liberal MP, the Liberal Party had a female candidate.

However, losses at the last election have reduced the number of female Liberals within Parliament – eight of the 18 seats lost by the Liberal Party had a female Liberal candidate or incumbent.

The Liberal Party's review of the 2022 federal election made a number of key recommendations focused on improving diversity and inclusion within the Liberal Party. This will form the basis of any 10-year strategy to achieve diversity targets.

The Review has recommended that the Liberal Party establish:

- a target of 50% female representation within its Parliamentary ranks within ten years or three terms, and to adopt practical measures to increase the female representation in the Parliament as quickly as possible;
- a target of 50% for female membership, and female members in leadership roles within the organisation and branch structures;
- a network to engage current and former female parliamentarians, staff, and members, with the aim of promoting greater female representation in Parliament and provide opportunities and avenues for continued involvement for professional women associated with the Party;
- a training curriculum for female members of the Party who may be interested in applying for preselection and for all pre-selected female candidates; and
- an outreach programme for Party MPs and Senators to CALD communities.

The Review's recommendations will be considered by the Federal Executive of the Liberal Party shortly.

The Liberal Party has a range of existing programmes in place aimed improving the gender balance across the Liberal Party.

The Enid Lyons Fighting Fund has been in operation since 2018. It provides financial support to the local campaigns of Liberal female MPs and candidates in key seats.

The Divisions of the Liberal Party report to Federal Executive every two years on female participation and representation in the Party, as recommended in the Menzies Research Centre's Gender and politics report.

The Federal Executive has undertaken a membership-wide Female Membership Survey to understand what drives and encourages membership and participation.

The Divisions of the Liberal Party have a range of programs in place that support female membership and participation. This includes dedicated training and networking programs.

## **The Nationals**

The Nationals support the efforts of the Australian Parliament to create a safer and more respectful place of work for everyone within the parliamentary precinct.

The Nationals will continue our tradition of promoting selection of the best local candidates to represent their communities in both the Organisational and Parliamentary wings.

Likewise, the leadership of the Organisational and Parliamentary wings is chosen on merit.

Following the last federal election, the leadership team elected by The Nationals party room includes Senator Perin Davey as Deputy Leader and Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie as Leader of The Nationals in the Senate.

The Nationals were the first party to elect a woman, Mrs Shirley McKerrow OAM, as the Federal President. We were also the first to appoint a female Federal Director in Cecile Ferguson.

The Nationals have programmes aimed at supporting and increasing women's participation in politics at both state and federal level, such as the Federal Women's Council's Shirley McKerrow Scholarship.

Today, the Federal Management Committee of The Nationals includes seven women of the sixteen voting positions. They include the influential positions including Federal President, Federal Treasurer, Federal Secretary, and Policy Committee Chair. Additionally, the Federal Women's Council and Young Nationals Presidents are full and active participants of the Federal Management Committee.

The Nationals are focused on ensuring we have diversity of socio-economic and geographic background, life experience and professional skills. This focus is nationwide and applies at the local and state level as well as federally.

Within the federal team we have people from cropping and livestock, manufacturing, journalism, Local and State government, police officers, regional finance, small business operators, education, accountancy, a prosecutor, social work, agricultural science, an economist, the performing arts, and a doctor.

The professional development of organisational leaders and staff is being reviewed with a plan to offer more training opportunities.

Federal Management has resolved to develop a more systematic approach to candidate identification and development and will be working in collaboration with the State Divisions. It is the local members of each State branch who choose their organisational leaders and candidates for election at state and federal elections. One of the key goals and KPIs of the identification and development of candidates, leaders and political professionals is to reflect the diversity of the communities The Nationals represent.

The most recent example of the talent identification and recruitment efforts was the Victorian State election where The Nationals won an additional three lower house seats, two of which were won by female Nationals candidates, plus the election of an additional female Upper House Member. Over 53% of The Nationals State team are female.

In Queensland the Leader of the Liberal National Party has set a goal of 50% of the target 14 seats to be contested by women. The LNP have also commenced training programs for future leaders and have weighted participation in favour of women and people with CALD backgrounds.

At the coming New South Wales election nearly 40% of The Nationals team are women and in the Northern Territory, Lia Finocchiaro is the Leader of the Opposition and at the time of her election was the youngest MLA in the history of the Legislative Assembly.

## Australian Greens

The Australian Greens have committed to the full adoption of the Set the Standard recommendations and have revised staff and MP codes of conduct to specifically require behaviour that recognises and values diversity, abilities and inclusivity. In addition to other minimum standards of training, staff and Members of Parliament must complete First Nations Cultural Awareness, Anti-racism and Accessibility training.

Australian Greens MPs have given our support to the Codes of Conduct drafted by the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards, which specifically prohibit discrimination in any form, including on the grounds of race, age, sex, sexuality, gender identity, disability, or religion and require MPs to foster inclusivity and respect diversity. The Greens are pushing for the Codes of Conduct to be adopted and implemented by Parliament as soon as possible.

Gender equity and equal opportunity are founding principles of the Australian Greens, and those principles continue to inform decisions regarding recruitment, pre-selection of candidates and the composition of our leadership teams. Our federal parliamentary team is very diverse, with more than 55% of our Federal MPs identifying as women, and with representation from First Nations communities, people of colour, people with a disability, LGBTIQ+ folk, regional areas, and young people. We recognise that this is important for equity and diversity.

We also actively try to increase the representation of First Nations people, people of colour, people with disability and LGBTIQ+ people amongst our staff. We do this by offering flexible working arrangements and by encouraging applications from these cohorts in our job advertisements. Samples of wording that has been included in Australian Greens job advertisements is shown below:

*“The Greens are an equal opportunity employer, which means we strongly encourage any interested and qualified parties to apply – we don’t discriminate on the basis of age, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.”*

*“If you feel you meet most, but not all, of the selection criteria, please do not be dissuaded from applying. People of culturally diverse backgrounds are actively encouraged to apply.”*

*“The Australian Greens encourage applications from any interested and qualified people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strongly encouraged to apply. We don’t discriminate on the basis of sex, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.*

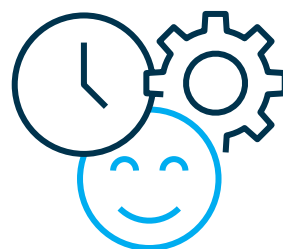
*We welcome people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to apply for all our roles.”*



We recognise that diversity makes our staffing team stronger too. Of senior staff roles, 55% are held by people identifying as women and non-binary. We are reviewing data collection policies to improve the information we have regarding staff and members to identify areas where proactive steps are needed to strengthen diversity further.

Parliamentary departments have commenced reviewing their diversity and inclusion policies and activities, with a particular focus on identifying opportunities to expand their collaboration on strategies and actions to support workplace diversity and inclusion (recommendation 8). This includes increasing support for diversity inclusive events, significant dates and joint employee networks (building on the support previously provided for a joint Parliamentary Service Indigenous Employee Network and Parliamentary Service LGBTI network).

# Systems to support performance



**DESIRED OUTCOME:** People should be clear about their roles and responsibilities, and have consistent and standardised systems, processes and advice to support performance

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
11 Office of Parliamentary Staffing and Culture	In progress
12 Professionalising management practices for MoP(S) Act employees	In progress
13 Professional development for MoP(S) Act employees	In progress
14 Best practice training	Partly implemented
15 Guidance material in relation to termination of employment for MoP(S) Act employees	In progress
16 Fair termination of employment process for MoP(S) Act employees	In progress
17 Legislative amendments to MoP(S) Act	Implemented
18 Comprehensive review of the MoP(S) Act	Implemented
19 Monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement	In progress
3 External review of progress	Pending

## Human resources support and administration

*Set the Standard* recommended the establishment of an Office of Parliamentary Staffing and Culture (OPSC) to provide human resources support and administrative functions in the areas of policy development, training, advice and support, and education to parliamentarians and MoP(S) Act employees (recommendations 11–16).

The Government consulted with current MoP(S) Act employees across the Parliament to ensure the proposed OPSC/human resources entity would effectively serve their needs. The Government reported the outcomes of those consultations to the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce.

Following this consultation, the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce agreed that the new entity should be established as an independent statutory agency. The new entity will integrate the functions currently provided by the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS), with the exception of the expanded workplace review function which will be considered by the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce in the context of the implementation of an Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission. It will retain the title of the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service. The new PWSS will have a Chief Executive Officer and a board, and will be supported by a consultative/advisory body with members comprising external experts, parliamentarians from all parties and MoP(S) Act staff.

The Government will prepare legislation for introduction in 2023 to establish the new PWSS.

Pending establishment of the new human resources entity, the Department of Finance progressed a range of induction and training initiatives in the lead up to and following the 2022 Federal Election. A refreshed induction program, six-week and three-month check ins for parliamentarians and a new induction program for MoP(S) Act employees were delivered, and continue to be offered to all new and existing staff. The new induction programs provide a range of information including:

- guidance on office composition and staffing
- merit-based recruitment practices and the importance of creating a diverse and inclusive workplace
- performance management, management of misconduct and termination guidance
- behaviour expectations
- work health and safety obligations
- health and wellbeing support options
- training programs, including professional development and *Safe and Respectful Workplaces* training available to parliamentarians and their staff.

Further training programs were rolled out as part of the newly developed induction programs. The Department of Finance has undertaken review work to expand the professional development program for MoP(S) Act employees to include contemporary and engaging programs that enhance capability. Preparatory work has also commenced to consider leadership programs that could feature as part of the services offered by the new human resources entity.

The four parliamentary departments have also completed self-assessments of their respectful workplace behaviour training against the 'best practice criteria' outlined in the *Set the Standard* report (recommendation 14).

## Legislative amendments

*Set the Standard* reviewed the extent to which existing legislation promotes or impedes safe and respectful workplaces. The report recommended legislative reform in relation to the responsibilities of the employer (recommendation 17) and protections against age and disability discrimination (recommendation 24). In response, these recommendations were implemented through various amendments made as part of the Parliamentary Workplace Reform (Set the Standard Measures No. 1) Bill 2022.

### Parliamentary Workplace Reform (Set the Standard Measures No. 1) Bill 2022

*The Parliamentary Workplace Reform (Set the Standard Measures No. 1) Bill 2022 passed Parliament on 15 February 2022. The Bill amended the MoP(S) Act, the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act), the Age Discrimination Act 2004 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.*

*Amendments to the MoP(S) Act were made to provide that reasons for termination of employment must be given in writing and to clarify that the existing legislative requirements apply to the termination of employment of MoP(S) Act employees.*

*Amendments to the WHS Act were made to clarify that parliamentarians are officers of the Commonwealth for the purposes of the Act.*

*Amendments to the Age Discrimination Act and Disability Discrimination Act were made to clarify that these laws apply to staff employed or engaged under the MoP(S) Act.*

## MoP(S) Act Review

Staff of parliamentarians are employed under the MoP(S) Act. *Set the Standard* recommended a review of the operation and effectiveness of the MoP(S) Act to ensure consistency with modern employment frameworks (recommendation 18) ('the Review'). The Review, undertaken by PM&C, was the first comprehensive review of the MoP(S) Act since it came into force in 1984.

PM&C conducted the Review from February until September 2022. The Review was informed by contributions from current and former MoP(S) Act employees, parliamentarians, academics, unions, parliamentary departments, Commonwealth government agencies, and state and international jurisdictions. The Review received 47 written submissions, 388 survey responses and conducted more than 70 interviews and stakeholder engagements.

The Government released the [Review report](#) on 7 October 2022 and both the Government and Opposition announced their in-principle support for all 15 recommendations. The Government has indicated it will work with the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce and across the Parliament to implement the Review recommendations and drive the necessary reforms to ensure the

employment framework and workplace embodies the high standards expected by staff and the Australian community.

Implementation of these reforms will be progressed alongside implementation of other *Set the Standard* recommendations, including the development of the new human resources entity for parliamentarians and their staff, Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission and codes of conduct.

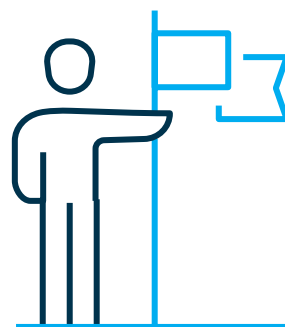
## Outcomes of the MoP(S) Act Review

*In the main, the Review concluded that the framework of the MoP(S) Act was broadly appropriate, but required some amendments to modernise it, provide greater clarity, and improve transparency. The biggest issues and gaps identified relate to human resources capability within offices, the human resources advice and support available to parliamentarians and employees, and accountability mechanisms.*

*The Review makes 15 recommendations to address gaps in the MoP(S) Act framework, including the following:*

- *Update the MoP(S) Act to (i) re-categorise MoP(S) employees in accordance with how they are grouped in practice (i.e. personal staff of Ministers and of other parliamentarians, and electorate staff), (ii) include an objects clause, (iii) incorporate employment principles to articulate the desired organisational culture for MoP(S) Act employment, and (iv) articulate parliamentarian and employee obligations.*
- *The new human resources entity for parliamentarians and their staff undertake a review of the factors affecting workloads, particularly in electorate offices, including support systems and processes, and external factors such as the adequacy of government services and electorate composition, to inform an evidence-based consideration of office and staffing resources.*
- *Require parliamentarians to recruit suitable candidates against position descriptions. This will also drive cultural change and greater professionalisation of the MoP(S) workplace. The new human resources entity should assist parliamentarians to engage candidates for positions, advise on best practice for setting up an office, oversee induction and training, and provide centralised human resources support to both parliamentarians and staff across the life-cycle of MoP(S) Act employment.*
- *Require parliamentarians to seek best practice advice from the new human resources entity prior to effecting a termination of employment and ensure both the employing parliamentarian and the new human resources entity (where there is an immediate risk) have authority to suspend an employee from the workplace where appropriate.*
- *Increase transparency and accountability by requiring (i) certain terms and conditions that apply to MoP(S) Act employment to be made public, and (ii) the new human resources entity to report annually on the administration of the Act, including on staffing allocations.*

# Standards, reporting and accountability



**DESIRED OUTCOME:** We should have clear and consistent standards of behaviour, with processes to ensure it is safe to make a report and that complaints are addressed. We want people to be held to account, including through visible consequences for misconduct

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
<b>20</b> Expansion of the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service	🟡 Partly implemented
<b>21</b> Code of conduct	🟡 Partly implemented
<b>22</b> Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission	🟢 In progress
<b>23</b> Extend public interest disclosure protections to MoP(S) Act employees	🟡 Partly implemented
<b>24</b> Ensure protections against age and disability discrimination	🟢 Implemented

## Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards

The Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards was established in February 2022 to inquire into and report on matters relating to the development of codes of conduct for Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces (recommendation 21). The Committee ceased to exist at the commencement of the election period on 11 April 2022 and was re-established on 27 July 2022, following the commencement of the 47<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

The Committee published 44 of the 48 submissions received, held five public hearings in September and November 2022, conducted confidential focus groups and invited members of the parliamentary community to provide feedback via a survey.

The Committee handed down [its report](#) on 29 November 2022, with 16 recommendations and draft:

- Behaviour Standards for Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces
- Behaviour Code for Parliamentarians
- and a Behaviour Code for Parliamentarians' staff

## Draft Behaviour Standards for Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces

- *Act professionally and with integrity.*
- *Encourage and value diverse perspectives and recognise the importance of a free exchange of ideas.*
- *Recognise your power, influence or authority and do not abuse them.*
- *Uphold laws that support safe and respectful workplaces, including anti-discrimination, employment, work health and safety and criminal laws.*
- *Bullying, harassment, sexual harassment or assault, or discrimination in any form, including on the grounds of race, age, sex, sexuality, gender identity, disability or religion will not be tolerated, condoned or ignored.*

**Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards: Final Report (2022), Appendix 1**

The Committee recommended that the respective chambers of Parliament endorse these draft codes as an interim measure, until an Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission (see below) is established, and that the Government explore how it can enact a code for Parliamentarians' staff, following careful consultation.

It also recommended the formation of a staff and staff representative consultation group to be involved in the further development and implementation of the Behaviour Standards and Codes, including any guidance material.

The report recommends a proactive approach to education and training when implementing the behaviour codes, that training should be compulsory and participation by parliamentarians and staff be transparent.

## Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission

*Set the Standard* recommended that the Parliament establish an Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission (IPSC) that would receive and investigate complaints about code breaches and make recommendations on sanctions (recommendation 22).

The abovementioned report from the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards made recommendations that the behaviour standards and codes for Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces and Parliamentarians be incorporated into the standing orders for the respective chambers of Parliament once an IPSC is established.

The Committee recommended that in establishing the IPSC, the Government and the Parliament legislate a range of sanctions, including those proposed in the *Set the Standard* report. It also recommended that a review of the IPSC and the Behavioural Standards and Codes, be conducted one to two years after the establishment of the proposed IPSC.

The Government is considering the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards' report, tabled on 29 November 2022, and will continue to consult across the Parliament.

*Set the Standard* also recommended that the Government amend the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013* (Cth) to extend protections to MoP(S) Act employees, to support the operation of the Report's recommended standard and accountability mechanisms (recommendation 23). When the National Anti-Corruption Commission is established in mid-2023, MoP(S) Act employees who report corruption issues to the Commission will have strong protections against reprisal and detriment for their disclosure. The Government will consider further protections for MoP(S) Act employees who report misconduct in the context of implementing other recommendations in *Set the Standard*, in particular an IPSC, in consultation with staff and their representative unions.

## Parliamentary Workplace Support Service

The Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS) provides everyone who works or volunteers in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces with independent and confidential advice, support services and pathways to resolve workplace conflict.

The PWSS' support services expanded on 12 April 2022 to all people in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces (including former parliamentarians and MoP(S) Act employees) in relation to workplace conflict, misconduct or serious incidents (recommendation 20).

The PWSS' workplace review mechanism applies to parliamentarians and MoP(S) Act employees. Since an expansion of that function on 12 April 2022, the PWSS is also able to review complaints about conduct that occurred before 18 May 2019.

The expansion of the PWSS' workplace review mechanism to all Commonwealth parliamentary workplace participants will be a consideration in the context of establishing an IPSC.

A digital platform was established to receive anonymous complaints, and additional information is available about the handling of anonymous and bystander reports. The reporter can choose to use a pseudonym and can provide contact details if they would like follow up support from a PWSS case coordinator.

The PWSS has three core functions: support, including conflict resolution; education; and workplace investigations for parliamentarians and their staff.

PWSS' support is intentionally far reaching and includes prevention, early intervention through to local resolution or mediation of issues. The focus is to support everyone who works in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces to strengthen their workplace culture and practice. Protocols have been signed between the PWSS and all parliamentary departments to ensure the roles and obligations of each party are clear, as are the ways they will work together.



The PWSS' education and information offering is bespoke, and draws on the trends and issues the PWSS has knowledge of in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces.

If a workplace review is warranted, an independent investigator is assigned to independently assess, investigate and make findings on the balance of probabilities. The PWSS cannot direct the work of the independent reviewers and each step of the investigation process (the investigation, the assessment, the findings and the recommendations) is conducted independently of the PWSS.

### **Fictional Case study – Support**

*A manager in a Commonwealth parliamentary workplace seeks PWSS support regarding low team morale within their office. The manager considers that the main driver of these issues is a senior staff member, who can on occasion come across as abrupt and intimidating if work isn't to their standards.*

*The manager obtains the staff member's consent for the PWSS to contact them. The PWSS reaches out to the senior staff member, supports them to understand how their behaviour might be perceived by others and provides tips on providing feedback, managing staff, and managing stress. Simultaneously, the PWSS supports the manager to develop strategies to improve the workplace culture within the office, and provides advice on creating a safe and respectful workplace.*

*The manager reports they see a marked improvement in the office dynamics as a result of these efforts.*

### **Fictional Case study – Education**

*An office contacts the PWSS reporting that they are interacting with a number of distressed or angry constituents, and these interactions are having a negative impact on office staff. The PWSS provides support to the impacted employees, and suggests the whole office participate in a half hour workshop to learn strategies for de-escalating these types of situations in the future.*

*The PWSS tailors the interactive workshop to include real-life scenarios and discussion about identifying and managing the impacts of vicarious trauma.*

*While disappointed to learn there is no 'magic bullet' to de-escalate a person experiencing heightened emotions, after the workshop the team feel better equipped to respond to escalated constituents in future, and know what supports and resources are available.*

### **Fictional Case study – Workplace Investigation**

*An electorate office employee contacts the PWSS outlining allegations of sexual harassment by their office manager, and provides the PWSS with copies of text messages from the office manager which request sexual acts and suggest the employee's ongoing employment is tied to a favourable response.*

*The Head of the PWSS makes the decision that an independent investigation is appropriate and consults the Parliamentary Services Commissioner on choice of reviewer and scope of review. The PWSS then notifies the employing parliamentarian that an independent review is being commissioned. In the process of obtaining supporting information, the independent reviewer interviews the complainant, the respondent, and a number of witnesses. The PWSS provides support to the electorate office employee, the office manager, other staff and participants in the review, and the parliamentarian throughout this process.*

*The office manager is afforded procedural fairness throughout the independent investigation and is presented with the independent reviewer's draft report for comment. On the balance of probabilities, and in light of the supporting information, the independent reviewer finds that the allegation is substantiated, and recommends termination of the office manager's employment.*

*The independent reviewer also recommends the office seek ongoing support from the PWSS to ensure staff feel safe in the workplace, and to build team dynamics following the investigation process. Their report is provided to the parliamentarian and to the Parliamentary Services Commissioner (PSC).*

*The parliamentarian is reluctant to terminate the employment of the office manager, as they play a key role in the office. The PSC explains to the parliamentarian that if they do not follow the recommendations of the independent review, the matter will be escalated to the relevant presiding officer, who will further escalate to the Privileges Committee. The parliamentarian then accepts the recommendation and is connected with the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services Division of the Department of Finance to commence the termination process. The PWSS support the parliamentarian and their staff to implement the rest of the recommendations, and the electorate office employee continues to receive ongoing support from the PWSS.*

# Safety and wellbeing



**DESIRED OUTCOME:** People should be physically and psychologically well and feel safe and supported

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
<b>25</b> Work health and safety obligations	▶ In progress
<b>26</b> Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service	▶ In progress
<b>27</b> Review of Parliamentary sitting calendar and Order/Routine of Business	✔ Implemented
<b>28</b> Alcohol policies	▶ In progress

## Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service

The *Set the Standard* report recommended a new onsite Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service at the Australian Parliament House, as well as remote services, to provide physical and mental health services and promote wellbeing and early intervention support to all people in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces (recommendation 26). It was recommended that the new service be informed by a feasibility study to assess the demand and specific needs of workers and recommend the most effective option to deliver the services.

Key specialists were engaged to conduct the feasibility study into the operational design of the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service. The existing and proposed services such as the health and recreation centre, full-time nurse and the prescription medication delivery service were mapped. The feasibility study was completed in late November 2022.

## Parliamentary business

The first sitting calendar for the 47<sup>th</sup> Parliament was informed by considerations about wellbeing, balance and flexibility (recommendation 27). Changes were made to the House of Representatives' order of business on 27 July 2022 to defer divisions and quorums from 6.30 to 7.30pm on Mondays to Wednesdays, enabling members who are not scheduled to speak or to otherwise be involved in proceedings, to leave

the building and attend to family and other matters. Senate standing orders were similarly amended on 8 September 2022 to adjourn earlier on Mondays and defer divisions from 6:30pm on Mondays to Wednesdays. Also on 8 September, the House agreed to permit speeches to be made remotely in the Federation Chamber, on an ongoing basis, for any Member who has been granted leave of absence, such as for parental purposes.

## Work health and safety arrangements

Work is underway to further document and clarify existing WHS arrangements across Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces (recommendation 25). This review is expected to inform the development of a strategic framework and include a clear understanding of shared WHS responsibilities in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces. This will include matters such as governance and consultation, co-operation and co-ordination arrangements, and assurance mechanisms and processes. A WHS subcommittee of the implementation group was formed, drawing together expertise from across the parliamentary departments, Departments of Finance and Prime Minister and Cabinet and Comcare. This group is progressing a range of WHS matters and operates as an interim forum to sharing WHS information until the strategic framework is in place.

The Department of Finance and the parliamentary departments have also conducted risk assessments to identify and manage the WHS risks associated with alcohol (recommendation 28). These risk assessments have been reviewed to develop common principles that, once finalised, will inform the development of alcohol policies in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces. The parliamentary departments applied the risk assessment to review or validate their existing policies and measures for managing these risks.

The Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) has reviewed its serving of alcohol processes; as a result, a wider range of non-alcoholic and low alcohol beverages are served at all DPS-managed functions and events held at Australian Parliament House.

# Status of each recommendation

The below table is a snapshot of the status of the implementation of each recommendation from the Set the Standard report. More detailed progress updates are [reported online](#) following each meeting of the Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce.

**Table 2: Implementation status of each recommendation from the *Set the Standard* report**

Recommendation	Responsibility	Status
<b>1</b> Statement of Acknowledgement	Presiding Officers	✔ Implemented
<b>2</b> Institutional leadership	Parliamentary Leadership Taskforce	✔ Implemented
<b>3</b> External review of progress	Government	⏸ Pending
<b>4</b> Individual leadership	Political parties	➡ In progress
<b>5</b> Diversity among parliamentarians	Political parties	➡ In progress
<b>6</b> Diversity among MoP(S) Act employees	Political parties	➡ In progress
<b>7</b> Measurement and public reporting	New human resources entity when established	➡ In progress
<b>8</b> Diversity and inclusion in the parliamentary departments	Parliamentary departments	➡ In progress
<b>9</b> Access and inclusion	Presiding Officers / Parliamentary departments	➡ In progress
<b>10</b> Everyday respect in the parliamentary chambers	Presiding Officers	➡ In progress
<b>11</b> Office of Parliamentarian Staffing and Culture	Government	➡ In progress
<b>12</b> Professionalising management practices for MoP(S) Act employees	Government	➡ In progress
<b>13</b> Professional development for MoP(S) Act employees	Government	➡ In progress

Recommendation	Responsibility	Status
<b>14</b> Best practice training	Government	🟡 Partly implemented
<b>15</b> Guidance material in relation to termination of employment for MoP(S) Act employees	Government	🟡 In progress
<b>16</b> Fair termination of employment process for MoP(S) Act employees	Government	🟡 In progress
<b>17</b> Legislative amendments to MoP(S) Act	Government	🟢 Implemented
<b>18</b> Comprehensive review of the MoP(S) Act	Government	🟢 Implemented
<b>19</b> Monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement	New human resources entity when established	🟡 In progress
<b>20</b> Expansion of the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service	Government	🟡 Partly implemented
<b>21</b> Code of conduct	Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards	🟡 Partly implemented
<b>22</b> Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission	Government	🟡 In progress
<b>23</b> Extend public interest disclosure protections to MoP(S) Act employees	Government	🟡 Partly implemented
<b>24</b> Ensure protections against age and disability discrimination	Government	🟢 Implemented
<b>25</b> Work health and safety obligations	Parliamentary departments, Government and political parties	🟡 In progress
<b>26</b> Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service	Parliamentary departments	🟡 In progress
<b>27</b> Review of Parliamentary sitting calendar and Order/Routine of Business	Presiding Officers	🟢 Implemented
<b>28</b> Alcohol policies	Parliamentary departments, Government and political parties	🟡 In progress