

12 October 2022

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
By email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Letter of Endorsement of the Grata Fund Submission to the Inquiry on the Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Bill 2022

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (**PIAC**) welcomes the opportunity to consider the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee's inquiry on the Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Bill 2022 (**the Bill**).

PIAC is a leading social justice law and policy centre. We are an independent, non-profit organisations that works with people and communities who are marginalised and facing disadvantage. We have significant experience representing applicants in human rights proceedings.

PIAC endorses the points made by our colleagues the Grata Fund (**Grata**) in their submission dated 10 October 2022, which focuses on the costs reform aspects of the Bill. PIAC supports reforms to increase access to justice for victims and survivors of sexual harassment and sex discrimination. Currently substantial adverse costs risks and legal fees deter individuals, and particularly vulnerable victims, from bringing meritorious claims in the Courts.

Like Grata, PIAC recommends that the Bill be amended to replace the costs neutrality approach with an Equal Access approach. This change is required to ensure legal fees and costs do not continue to serve as a barrier to bringing valid claims and deterring perpetrators. We support the rationale and formulation of the Equal Access approach in Grata's submission and urge the Committee to adopt the draft amendment Grata have proposed.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Cohen
Principal Solicitor
Public Interest Advocacy Centre