

WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR — LEADER OF THE NATIONALS — LETTER OF COMPLAINT

457. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Women's Interests:

I refer to a letter in today's *The West Australian* from Bevan Ripp, the president of the Principals' Federation of WA; I quote —

... I am appalled at the report of the Premier making a unilateral decision to dismiss a complaint by the leader of the National party ...

He goes on to state that if a school principal behaved in the same manner as the Premier, they would potentially be in contravention of the Public Sector Management Act resulting in potentially very serious penalties, including dismissal. Will the minister please update the house on what is the proper process for managing complaints of workplace bullying or intimidation and advise whether dismissing them or labelling them as a fabrication of the victim is appropriate in any workplace?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I am surprised the deputy leader from the Liberal Party does not understand what the processes for making complaints are in this place. We are not employees; we are actually in a very privileged position here in the chamber. Of course, as a matter of principle, any complaint by a woman about harassment or intimidation needs to be heard. I have certainly said that publicly, and I think most reasonable people think that. But I cannot believe, considering the sorts of issues that are before this Parliament and before us as a state, we are still talking about this issue. Can I say without any shadow of a doubt; can I make very clear my position. I have known —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Transport, I call you to order for the first time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Mr Speaker —

Mr P.C. Tinley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Housing, I call you to order for the first time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Mr Speaker, I have known the Minister for Water for 40 years. I have known him every year for 40 years, and we have had a lot to do with each other in all those 40 years. I have never in that time ever known him to be physically aggressive or intimidating—ever! I have absolutely no hesitation in saying that I would be very, very surprised if there was any substance in this claim. Having said that, as a matter of principle, it is not unbelievable —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Point of Order

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The opposition will not let the member finish —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, this is a very important subject and I want to hear it. Thank you, minister.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: This is a sensitive subject, Mr Speaker, and they should let the Minister for Women's Interests answer this question.

The SPEAKER: Members, there will be no more interjections, please.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Ms S.F. McGURK: I repeat, Mr Speaker: I would be very, very surprised if there was any substance in this claim. Having said that, as a matter of principle, any claim by a woman that she has been intimidated or harassed needs to be heard. I will leave it at that. If the member does not understand what the avenues are for complaint in this place, I suggest she take it up within her own party or take it up with the Speaker.