



NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEDIA RELEASE

Privileges Committee

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Upper House inquiry supports Compliance Officer and Code of Conduct changes for Parliamentary Members

To allow claims of misconduct against Members of NSW Parliament to be better addressed – including claims of bullying and harassment – an Upper House inquiry supports the appointment of a new Compliance Officer role, and associated changes to the Code of Conduct for Members.

The matter was referred to the Upper House Privileges Committee in November last year, following motions passed in both Houses of Parliament to establish an officer to deal with certain misconduct matters involving Members. The committee is chaired by The Honourable Peter Primrose MLC.

"The Compliance Officer role and amendments to the Code of Conduct would allow misconduct matters such as bullying and general harassment involving Parliamentary Members to be handled quickly, effectively and confidentially," Mr Primrose said.

"Currently there is no formal mechanism for dealing with these issues. Suspected crimes and matters of sexual harassment, for example, can be referred to the police, and other major matters such as those of corruption can be referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). But when it comes to bullying, harassment and similar conduct breaches, there is no official process or requirement for action to be taken."

Mr Primrose said the Privileges Committee was thankful for submissions received as part of the inquiry from ICAC, ethics advisors and others, on how to better protect the institution of Parliament, Parliamentary Members and staff.

"We already have policies and procedures for parliamentary staff and for the staff of Members. A compliance officer will complete this framework, helping revise standards as well as the reputation of Members and the Parliament itself.

"The committee supports the proposed Compliance Officer role, recommending that it report directly to the Privileges Committee rather than the House itself. We also note that strong liaison between the role and ICAC, the Audit Office of NSW and the NSW Ombudsman – and close work with parliament's HR and audit functions – will be crucial to its success."

Full details of the committee's recommendations can be found in its inquiry report, released today: www.bit.ly/compliance-officer-inquiry. In it, the committee notes that this is the second time it has examined the proposal for an independent officer charged with investigating complaints against Members, having first recommended its support in 2014.

"The latest recommendations and findings have now been reported back to the Upper House," Mr Primrose said. "With this matter also referred to the Privileges Committee of the Legislative Assembly in November, we now look forward to the response of our counterparts."

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