

NOTICE OF FILING

Details of Filing

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Registry: NEW SOUTH WALES REGISTRY - FEDERAL COURT OF AUSTRALIA



Sia Lagos

Registrar

Important Information

This Notice has been inserted as the first page of the document which has been accepted for electronic filing. It is now taken to be part of that document for the purposes of the proceeding in the Court and contains important information for all parties to that proceeding. It must be included in the document served on each of those parties.

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Form 17
Rule 8.05(1)(a)



Statement of Claim

No. of 2023

Federal Court of Australia
District Registry: New South Wales
Division: General Division

Bruce Lehrmann

Applicant

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Respondent

The Applicant relies on the following facts and assertions:

THE RESPONDENT

- 1 The Respondent is and was at all material times:
 - (a) a statutory corporation duly incorporated pursuant to section 5 of the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983* (Cth) and is liable to be sued in its own corporate name and style;
 - (b) the broadcaster of matter on the television channels 24 and channels 2/21;
 - (c) the administrator and operator of the ABC News (Australia) YouTube channel on the YouTube website at <https://www.youtube.com/@abcnewsaustralia> and publisher of material on that channel.

FIRST MATTER COMPLAINED OF

- 2 On or about 9 February 2022, the Respondent published by television broadcast on channel 24 words and images of and concerning the Applicant in the Australian Capital Territory and every other State and Territory of Australia (a transcript of which

Filed on behalf of (name & role of party) Bruce Lehrmann, Applicant

Prepared by (name of person/lawyer) Paul Svilans

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(include state and postcode)

is set out at Annexure "A" hereto, and the Applicant relies upon the images and accompanying words and text) (the **first matter complained of**):

- (a) The first matter complained of comprised a broadcast of a joint address given by Ms Brittany Higgins and Grace Tame at the National Press Club on or about 9 February 2022;
- (b) The first matter complained of was broadcast on the channel known as ABC 24;
- (c) The first matter complained of was viewed by over 149,000 metro viewers;
- (d) The Applicant relies on the grapevine effect in relation to the publication of the first matter complained of;
- (e) Further particulars of publication of the first matter complained of will be supplied following discovery and interrogatories.

3 The first matter complained of, in its natural and ordinary meaning, was defamatory of the Applicant and carried the following defamatory imputation, or an imputation not differing in substance, of and concerning him:

- (a) *The Applicant raped Brittany Higgins on a couch in Parliament House.*

Particulars of parts of the first matter complained of

The Applicant relies on the whole of the first matter complained of as giving rise to the imputation pleaded. In particular, the Applicant relies on the following parts of the first matter complained of, adopting the paragraph numbering in Annexure "A" hereto, as follows:

- (a) paragraphs 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 17, 32, 82 and 106.

Particulars of identification

- (a) The Applicant was the person alleged by Ms Higgins to have sexually assaulted her;
- (b) The Applicant was on or about 7 August 2021 charged with an offence of sexual intercourse with Ms Higgins without consent and being reckless as to whether she had consented;

- (c) Viewers of the first matter complained of, or some of them, were aware of the substance of the matters set out in paragraphs (a) and/or (b) above;
- (d) By reason of the matters set out in paragraphs (a) – (c) above, the Applicant was identifiable and identified in the first matter complained of, and such identification was reasonable in the circumstances;
- (e) Further, and/or in the alternative to the above, the first matter complained of invited readers to speculate about the identity of the person accused by Ms Higgins of sexually assaulting her from the time of first publication, and such readers had already read and/or subsequently read articles published by mainstream media (including the Respondent) which named the Applicant as being the person accused by Ms Higgins of sexually assaulting her and/or of having been charged with the offence as particularised in paragraph (b) above, including:
 - (i) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-16/bruce-lehrmann-to-fight-sexual-assault-charge-brittany-higgins/100466176>;
 - (ii) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-05/bruce-lehrmann-committed-to-trial-in-brittany-higgins-rape-case/100596482>;
 - (iii) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-11-18/bruce-lehrmann-trial-date-set-june-2022/100629728>;
 - (iv) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-24/closed-hearing-december-application-bruce-lehrmann-rape-trial/101693666>;
 - (v) <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/bruce-lehrmann-identified-as-man-charged-with-sexual-assault-of-brittany-higgins-20210807-p58gql.html>;
 - (vi) <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/nov/18/brittany-higgins-charge-bruce-lehrmann-to-stand-trial-in-june>;
 - (vii) <https://www.news.com.au/national/nsw-act/distressed-brittany-higgins-accused-bruce-lehrmann-denies-allegations/news-story/0c535d67f3f811d078454302c9a8b1cb>;

(viii) <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/truecrimeaustralia/police-courts-nsw/man-to-be-charged-over-alleged-sexual-assault-of-brittany-higgins/news-story/140fc50a5fc2ac59621e0f9bb2c2d69a;>

(ix) [https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/exliberal-staffer-bruce-lehrmann-accused-of-raping-brittany-higgins-committed-to-stand-trial/news-story/5a0a695d0b5f8816a7e1f90de1546dde.](https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/exliberal-staffer-bruce-lehrmann-accused-of-raping-brittany-higgins-committed-to-stand-trial/news-story/5a0a695d0b5f8816a7e1f90de1546dde)

(f) Further, and/or in the alternative to the above, the Applicant was identified by the following persons who viewed the first matter complained of at the time of its publication and reasonably identified the Applicant:

- (i) Commonwealth politicians, political assistants and staffers, journalists and other persons who worked at Parliament House Canberra;
- (ii) Family, friends and acquaintances of the Applicant.

SECOND MATTER COMPLAINED OF

4 On or about 9 February 2022, the Respondent published by television broadcast on ABC channels 2/21 words and images of and concerning the Applicant in the Australian Capital Territory and every other State and Territory of Australia (a transcript of which is set out at Annexure "A" hereto, and the Applicant relies upon the images and accompanying words and text) (the **second matter complained of**):

- (a) The second matter complained of comprised a broadcast of a joint address given by Ms Brittany Higgins and Grace Tame at the National Press Club on or about 9 February 2022;
- (b) The second matter complained of was broadcast on the channel known as the "*main ABC channel*";
- (c) The Applicant relies on the grapevine effect in relation to the publication of the second matter complained of;
- (d) Further particulars of publication of the second matter complained of will be supplied following discovery and interrogatories.

5 The second matter complained of, in its natural and ordinary meaning, was defamatory of the Applicant and carried the following defamatory imputation, or an imputation not differing in substance, of and concerning him:

- (a) *The Applicant raped Brittany Higgins on a couch in Parliament House.*

Particulars of parts of the second matter complained of

The Applicant relies on the whole of the second matter complained of as giving rise to the imputation pleaded. In particular, the Applicant relies on the following parts of the second matter complained of, adopting the paragraph numbering in Annexure "A" hereto, as follows:

- (a) paragraphs 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 17, 32, 82 and 106.

Particulars of identification

The Applicant relies upon the particulars appended to paragraph 3.

THIRD MATTER COMPLAINED OF

6 On or about 9 February 2022 and thereafter the Respondent published of and concerning the Applicant on the ABC News (Australia) YouTube channel at the URL https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YO8lQ_rVM8g the joint address given by Ms Brittany Higgins and Grace Tame at the National Press Club on or about 9 February 2022, containing words and images of and concerning the Applicant, in the Australian Capital Territory and every other State and Territory of Australia, (a transcript of which is set out at Annexure "A" hereto, and the Applicant relies upon the images and accompanying words and text) (the **third matter complained of**):

- (a) The third matter complained of was published by the Respondent by uploading to and/or causing the uploading to, and thereby making the publication available and/or causing the publication to be made available for downloading and/or viewing and/or streaming to a large number of viewers including subscribers of ABC News (Australia) YouTube channel;
- (b) The publication was made available for downloading and/or viewing and/or streaming on and from about 9 February 2022;
- (c) There were about 127,000 views of the third matter complained of and 2,400 "likes";
- (d) The Applicant relies on the grapevine effect in relation to the publication of the third matter complained of;

- (e) Further particulars of publication of the third matter complained of will be supplied following discovery and interrogatories.

7 The third matter complained of, in its natural and ordinary meaning, was defamatory of the Applicant and carried the following defamatory imputation, or an imputation not differing in substance, of and concerning him:

- (a) *The Applicant raped Brittany Higgins on a couch in Parliament House.*

Particulars of parts of the third matter complained of

The Applicant relies on the whole of the third matter complained of as giving rise to the imputation pleaded. In particular, the Applicant relies on the following parts of the third matter complained of, adopting the paragraph numbering in Annexure "A" hereto, as follows:

- (a) paragraphs 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 17, 32, 82 and 106.

Particulars of identification

The Applicant relies upon the particulars appended to paragraph 3 above.

CONCERNS NOTICE

8 On 8 February 2023 the Applicant gave the Respondent a Concerns Notice by way of letter from the Applicant's solicitors addressed to David Anderson, Managing Director of the Respondent, Justin Stevens, Director News, Analysis and Investigations of the Respondent, and Ingrid Silver, General Counsel of the Respondent (the **Concerns Notice**).

9 On 7 March ABC Legal, on behalf of the Respondent, sought further particulars as to matters alleged in the Concerns Notice, which was responded to by way of letter from the Applicant's solicitors dated 21 March 2023.

SERIOUS HARM

10 Each of the matters complained of caused, or is likely to cause serious harm to the Applicant's reputation by reason of the following:

- (a) By February 2023 it was notorious throughout Australia that the Applicant was the person accused or, and charged with, the sexual assault of Ms Higgins

and the Applicant repeats the particulars of identification specified in paragraph 3 above;

- (b) the Imputation carried by each of the matters complained of is extremely serious, namely an assertion as a matter of fact that the Applicant had raped Ms Higgins on a couch in Parliament House;
- (c) the statements made by Ms Higgins in the matters complained of (and the pleaded imputation arising from them) had an inherent tendency to cause serious harm to the Applicant;
- (d) The extent of publication of the matters complained of. The first and second matters complained of were broadcast on national television (with the first matter complained of having been viewed by over 149,000 metro viewers), and the third matter complained of being continued to be published online (with 127,000 views and 2,400 “likes”).
- (e) The extent of publication of the matters complained of, together with the particulars of identification specified in paragraphs 3, 5 and 7 above and the fact that the allegations by Ms Higgins had become such an overwhelming issue in Australian public discourse, meant that a significant number of persons would, and it is inferred did believe that the Applicant had as a matter of fact raped Ms Higgins on the couch in Parliament House;
- (f) Those persons specified in sub paragraph (d) and (e) above included potential jurors from the ACT who could be asked to sit on the trial of the charges made against the Applicant.
- (g) the forum of the address as given by Ms Higgins within the matters complained of, being the National Press Club, gave gravitas and credence to the assertion by Ms Higgins in the matters complained of that the Applicant had raped Ms Higgins on the couch in Parliament House;
- (h) The Respondent portrays itself in its Editorial Policies as a trustworthy and respected news source, such that the content of the matters complained of would be considered by viewers as credible and reliable;
- (i) the continuing publication of the third matter complained of, thereby causing or being likely to cause further damage to the Applicant’s reputation;

- (j) the grapevine effect.

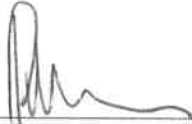
DAMAGE

- 11 The Applicant's hurt and harm occasioned by the publication of the matters complained of was aggravated by his knowledge of the following:
- (a) The publication of the matters complained of during the period that the ACT criminal proceedings brought against the Applicant over the alleged sexual assault of Ms Higgins were taking place, in an apparent contemptuous attempt to prejudice the Jury before whom the proceedings were being heard as against the Applicant;
 - (b) The continuing publication of the third matter complained of despite the Respondent being aware that the said ACT criminal proceedings as against the Applicant had been dropped;
 - (c) The continuing publication of the third matter complained of despite the Respondent being put on notice as to the defamatory nature of the matters complained of by way of the service of the Concerns Notice upon the Respondent;
 - (d) The failure of the Respondent to apologise to the Applicant despite the request by the Applicant for publication of an apology as contained in the Concerns Notice as served upon the Respondent;
 - (e) The decision of the Respondent to publish the first and second matters complained of live rather than utilising a delay system, so that any potentially defamatory statements of and concerning the Applicant could not be removed prior to publication;
 - (f) The Respondent was recklessly indifferent to the truth or falsity of the imputation carried by the matters complained of in publishing live the assertions and allegations giving rise to the imputation pleaded and thereby without giving the Applicant a reasonable opportunity to respond;
 - (g) The encouragement by the Respondent for viewers to share by social media the third matter complained of;
 - (h) The improper and unjustifiable suggestion in the letter from the Respondents dated 4 April 2023 that the matters complained of could not have caused

serious harm to the reputation of the Applicant, when several hundred thousand people watched a person say (on either Television or on the internet via You-Tube) that she had been raped in parliament house, in circumstances when the Applicant's criminal trial for precisely the same allegation was then pending.

- (i) Further particulars of aggravated damages will be provided in due course.

Date: 5 April 2023



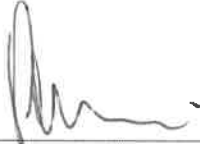
Signed by Paul Svilans
Lawyer for the Applicant

This pleading was prepared by Paul Svilans, solicitor and Matthew Richardson SC

Certificate of lawyer

I, Paul Svilans, certify to the Court that, in relation to the Statement of Claim filed on behalf of the Applicant, the factual and legal material available to me at present provides a proper basis for each allegation in the pleading.

Date: 5 April 2023



Signed by Paul Svilans, Lawyer for the Applicant

Annexure “A”

1.	Voiceover	Today at the National Press Club, Grace Tame and Brittany Higgins; a powerful new female force. Together they sparked a nationwide reckoning about the treatment of women, gender based violence and the impacts of sexual assault. Grace Tame and Brittany Higgins with today’s address.
2.	L Tingle	Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club in Canberra, and today’s Westpac address. My name is Laura Tingle and I am the President of the Club. My workplace for the last 35 years has been Parliament House. There have been many generations of politicians, staffers and journalists who have passed through it in that time.
3.		But in the past year the story of what has happened inside Parliament House, everything from shocking allegations of assault, to the casually brutal treatment of both politicians and staff, to the bullying of women from its national pulpit has been seen through a very different prism.
4.		Of course, Parliament House is just one particular workplace with its own particular problems. In the broader world we have also been forced to confront some harsh realities about the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment, domestic violence and the abuse of children. Many of these stories are seen as being stories about women and they have certainly unleashed a great anger in many women in Australia, but they should never be just stories about and of interest to women.
5.		The thing that ties all these stories together is about relationships of unequal power and our two speakers today have been central to recasting the way we see these relationships and what we expect from our leaders as a result.
6.		I don’t feel I really have to introduce Brittany Higgins and Grace Tame, such has been their impact on the national stage, but I welcome them both to the National Press Club today and I’d ask Brittany Higgins to speak to us first.
7.	B Higgins	I was raped on a couch in what I thought was the safest and most secure building in Australia; in a workplace that has a police and security presence 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The parliament of Australia is safe, it is secure, except if you’re a woman. If what happened to me can happen there, it can happen anywhere, and it does. It happens to women everywhere.

8.		A little over a year ago I sat down with my partner, David, and I told him that I'd decided to speak publicly about my assault, knowing that it would mean quitting my job and likely leaving Canberra, knowing it would mean subjecting myself to judgement, to vitriol, to political hit jobs and online hate.
9.		I made my decision to speak out because the alternative was to be part of the culture of silence inside Parliament House. I spoke out because I wanted the next generation of staffers to work in a better place, to take up a dream job like I did, and for it to live up to their hopes and not betray them. And, above all, I decided to speak out because I hoped it would make it easier for other women to speak out too.
10.		It's become my whole life mantra, right through the past 12 months, to make it easier for other women to speak. So while I'm very grateful to take the chance to talk at the National Press Club, I want to stress that I don't pretend to speak for all survivors. Not for a minute do I imagine that I could. Everyone's trauma is personal. Everyone's story of abuse and fear and betrayal and humiliation takes a different shape. I never wanted to be a spokesperson or a standard-bearer, but I do know that it's easier to share your story if you recognise something of it in someone else's. And, above all, I believe it will be easier for women to share their stories if they see it makes a difference in the workplace, in our national life, and in our parliament. That's what keeps me speaking out, my determination to drive change.
11.		Nearly a year after the March 4 Justice made its way to the threshold of federal parliament, too little has changed. If you go back and read articles from March 15, there was a sense of a national moment of reckoning, a feeling of unstoppable momentum, an irresistible force, a raging current that would not be turned aside by tired old platitudes from fathers of daughters.
12.		But I stand here today fearful that this moment of transformative potential, the bravery of all those women who spoke up and stood up and said 'enough is enough' is in danger of being minimised to a flare-up, a blip on the radar, a month-long wonder in the national conversation. Or, worse, just a political perception problem neutralised and turned into a net positive.
13.		Even beyond that, I'm worried what too many people in the government and the media took out of the events of last year was that we need to be better

		at talking about the problem. In a lot of cases that seems to have meant trading off offensive, tone deaf statements for a convoluted mix of appeasing weasel words. In the national conversation, we have this passive, anonymous language, vaguely talking about 'wrongs done' as if sexual violence falls out of the sky, as if it is perpetrated by no one, as if it is inflicted on no one.
14.		For a start, recognising there's a problem is 50 years short of what's required, and the women and girls of Australia deserve so much better than an improvement in the way that we publicly discuss the dangers that they face at home and in their daily lives.
15.		Put another way, last year wasn't a march for acknowledgement, it wasn't a march for coverage, it wasn't a march for language, it was a march for justice. And that justice demands real change in our laws, as well as in our language, in our national culture, as well as our national conversation.
16.		That starts with the Prime Minister. Yes, some of his language last year was shocking and at times, admittedly, a bit offensive. But his words wouldn't matter if his actions had measured up, then or since.
17.		What bothered me most about the whole 'imagine if it were our daughters' spiel wasn't that he necessarily needed his wife's advice to help contextualise my rape in a way that mattered to him personally. All he could do -- and that's how he realised it was a bad thing. I didn't want his sympathy as a father. I wanted him to use his power as Prime Minister.
18.		I wanted him to wield the weight of his office and drive change in the party and our parliament and out into the country. And one year later, I don't care if the government has improved the way that they talk about these issues. I'm not interested in words anymore. I want to see action.
19.		Late last year, we saw the final report from the Jenkins review, commissioned by Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, who very kindly is here today. It revealed what many of us in this room already know to be true. Sexual harassment and bullying is rife in the corridors of power, with over 51% of participants reporting incidents of this nature.
20.		I earnestly thank the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition for their statements of acknowledgement and apologies offered yesterday to victims of abuse in our national parliament. In addition, I'd like to

		acknowledge Zali Steggall , who enabled a handful of us to actually attend in person.
21.		It was encouraging and an important sentiment but I am cognisant that at this point in time they are still only words. Actions are what matter. And what will be the true test of whether the government is committed to creating systemic change. Task forces are great, codes of conduct are important, but only if it's paired with institutional change.
22.		There are 28 recommendations in the Jenkins review and without their implementation we will continue to see this toxic culture exist within our most powerful institution, the cornerstone of which is the Office of Parliamentary Staffing and Culture, legislative reform to the MOP(S) Act, and an independent complaints mechanism for the entirety of Parliament House. Without these changes women will inadvertently continue to be discouraged from taking up roles within Parliament, or take a seat at the leadership table. If we truly want a gender inclusive society we need more vocal women in rooms where key decisions are being made to ensure that there is a gender lens placed over national policy. This starts with the implementation of the Jenkins review. The question is, if this moment doesn't spark change in our parliament, what will?
23.		I may have been naive but up until 2021 I truly didn't realise that gender was still a defining feature of my humanity. I thought of myself as a university student, a government employee, an Australian, but I have now been forced to come to terms with the fact that my gender is still a key feature of my personhood to some people.
24.		That brings me to the National Action Plan. The release of the draft National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children has been hotly anticipated. More than a decade after its historic launch rates of violence remain far too high. In fact, they've barely changed since the launch of the plan, and in some cases they've actually increased. This lack of inaction[sic] at the national level has seen the states go it alone. Victoria had the first Royal Commission into Family Violence, spurred on by the bravery of another former Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty.
25.		For women over the age of 15, one in four have experienced intimate partner violence. One in two women have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime. I bet you've heard those statistics rattled off at White Ribbon

		breakfasts and at the top of ministerial statements for a decade; I know I have. But recognising these horrific facts is no longer sufficient.
26.		Women with disability across Australia experience significantly higher levels of all forms of violence. For example, nine out of ten women with an intellectual disability report experiencing sexual assault. And Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised, and 11 times more likely to die due to assault.
27.		Any single one of these statistics should challenge us, they should confront us, they should spur us to do whatever it takes. But, instead, they've become sort of this throat clearing exercise that we all just kind of tolerate; a mumbled pro forma before we get into some old talk about how slow and difficult change is.
28.		To its credit, the National Plan doesn't aim low. Unfortunately, its aims are so lofty and vague that it's impossible to disagree with and equally difficult to examine. The Plan talks about a future free from violence against women and their children, claiming that it will serve as a blueprint for change that sets out our collective ambitions, priorities and targets for how we will work to end violence against women and children over the next ten years. It claims to integrate all we have learnt since 2010. These aspirational statements are indeed ambitious and equal to the scale of the challenge. But the question is, how will they be achieved. That is, unfortunately, where the draft plan has lost its way. Instead, it is largely a collection of statistics describing the problem, filled with warm sentiments and platitudes, attached to noble outcomes which lacks the promised learnings from the past decade towards a future free from violence against women and children, and clear targets to that end.
29.		Without clearer action and firm targets there can be no accountability. And without accountability we are back to a world where we are describing the problem as seen as sufficient.
30.		The draft plan does not even directly acknowledge the fact that we've failed on our first account. Our one single measure for success, a target to see a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children during the next 12 years; we failed. How can you speak of drawing on everything you've learned without confessing the failure of the one test we have set ourselves. Instead, we have muttered acknowledgements, the

		rates of domestic violence have remained stable and rates of sexual violence have increased.
31.		In response, the Plan laments wistfully that more needs to be done. But, if it is more of the same, compounded by a refusal to examine the past failures, let alone acknowledge them, then this plan won't be worth the glossy paper it will eventually be printed on. And Australian women and children will suffer through another decade of violence and abuse while politicians and policy makers wring their hands about the fact that we need to turn things around in 2040.
32.		As I think you've gathered by now, my patience has run out. I want to close by saying, that for all the fear and anger and sadness that my time in politics has brought me, it didn't take away my belief in Australia, my faith in our democracy. I know our country can do better, for women and girls. I know our parliament will be a better, stronger place if more women are ministers and members and senators and staffers. I know change is possible, and as long as there are people like Grace Tame and Rosie Batty and Saxon Mullins and Chanel Contos and Dania Mahoney and the amazing team at the ANU Global Institute for Women's Leadership, I know that change is coming, it's just up to us to keep those in power held to account. To take up the challenge we each have a responsibility to one another and have a role to play in making things better for the next generation of women.
33.	G Tame	The Press haven't even asked me any questions yet.
34.		Many of you already know my story. I was targeted, stalked, isolated, groomed and repeatedly raped as a minor by a known serial paedophile. Child sexual abuse is the epitome of evil. It is also disturbingly common. Perpetrated not my monsters on the fringes of society but by everyday citizens hiding in plain sight. One in six boys and one in four girls is abused before their 18 th birthday.
35.		We tend to think of child sexual abuse in terms of physical acts but, in reality, it is mostly invisible, characterised by calculated, insidious, systematic, psychological manipulation that leaves its survivors with lasting internalised, complex trauma. Trauma that is not only reinforced by negative social attitudes but also, ironically, by the very systems and institutions, the structures designed to protect us, to bring justice, like the courts, like the

		press. Such is the vicious cycle or, rather, tangled web of abuse culture and, thus, we see the effects of abuse persist long after abuse itself stops.
36.		And wherever they can, abusers will turn survivors and their supporters against each other. One of the key objectives of perpetrators and their defenders is to maintain control of the narrative by denying, twisting or completely rewriting the truth. As a result, survivors remain trapped in a seemingly inescapable state of repeated self-justification.
37.		By design, those who are already exhausted and traumatised become exponentially so, ceding more and more power to abusers in the process. Our pain is their strength but, by the same token, our strength is their pain. The higher we rise the harder they try to regain control.
38.		Why, just the other day someone online called me a horrible, horrible person who aggressively pursued her teacher and then blamed everyone else. I've lost count of how many times I've had to say this now, but the man who abused me was at my high school from 1992 until I reported him in 2011. His first successful target was in 1993 and the school knew this before I was born. I've spoken with three others he took advantage of before my time and countless other women, and men, who bore witness to his predatory behaviour during his 18 year tenure who, now wishing they hadn't, turned a blind eye. Who, now wishing they hadn't, smiled through it, along with 28 multi-media files of child abuse material, which included nine files of videos of adults penetrating children. The police found a trophy file of students, both in uniform and topless on his computer, all of whom either came from broken homes, like me, or lived in a boarding house away from their families. And among the items that were assumed to be mine that were given back to me after the investigation was an envelope full of my own hair. But, sure, I was the predator, it was all my fault.
39.		If I can still be shamed into believing that today it's no wonder that even amid this national reckoning with all the empowerment it has generated for survivors, many still remain hesitant to publicly come forward with their stories. Sexual assault, child sexual abuse and domestic violence are all linked by this common thread of abuse of power. But each of these traumas is markedly different. The benefit in relating them is that it connects us as a community but the dangers in conflating them include erasing individual experiences and undermining the need for tailored solutions.
40.		One of the more complex challenges I've faced in my work is walking the fine line between sexual assault and child sexual abuse survivor advocacy.

		Sexual assault is a distinctly gendered issue and whilst I happily lend my voice to it, I'm not just an advocate for women. I am an advocate for all survivors of child sexual abuse, many of whom are male. We must preserve that nuance, every nuance in our discussions. We cannot forget our boys and we cannot forget our men, not only as welcome, equal participants in this ongoing conversation, and without ignoring many negative patriarchal customs, we cannot forget our boys and men who are fellow survivors of abuse.
41.		Yes, statistics say that perpetrators are more often than not men. Yes, statistics say that women are over-represented in the survivor category. But statistics are not people. People are people, not political footballs, not disposable news items, people.
42.		This year I've seen how even the most seemingly commonsense movements are lost in translation because others deliberately misrepresent them and then project division onto them that isn't even real. For instance, certain members of the commentariat have consistently labelled me as politically divisive, failing to mention that I've spent most of last year having frank, productive meetings with politicians on all sides, at both the state and federal level.
43.		So, after a year of being re-victimised, commodified, objectified, sensationalised, delegitimised, misquoted, gaslit and thrown under the bus by the biased mainstream media, despite my inclusive messaging, I would just like to take this opportunity to have a glass of water. [TAKES A DRINK] And, thank you for reminding me that I really have nothing to lose. On that note...
44.		Brace yourselves. On the 17 th of August last year, not five months after being named Australian of the Year, I received a threatening phone call from a senior member of a government funded organisation asking for my word that I wouldn't say anything damning about the Prime Minister on the evening of the next Australian of the Year Awards. "You're an influential person, he'll have a fear", they said. A fear? What kind of fear, I asked myself. A fear for our nation's most vulnerable? A fear for the future of our planet? And then I heard the words, "You know, with an election coming soon." And it crystallised, a fear, a fear for himself and no one else. A fear that he might lose his position or, more to the point, his power. Sound familiar to anyone? Well it does to me.

45.		<p>I remember standing in the shadow of a trusted authority figure being threatened in just the same veiled way. I remember him saying, "I'll lose my job if anyone hears about this and you wouldn't want that, would you." No. What I wanted in that moment is the same thing I want right now and that is an end to the darkness, an end to sexual violence, safety, equity, respect, a better future for all of us, peace, a future driven by unity and truth, not one dictated authoritatively under the politics of division and spin, shared freedoms. How beautiful, for instance, is the freedom of speech. I haven't always had it. Many still don't. So if those of us with a voice don't use it to fight for what is right, to fight for those without a voice, then what hope is there. What is the point of platforms like this. What is the point of life if not to connect, to communicate honestly and openly with one another in the pursuit of progress with whatever means possible. What is the point of awarding someone for their work, only to stifle them while they do it when it gets too real.</p>
46.		<p>I am here because I made a conscious decision to stand up to evil and I have been calling out injustice ever since. To retreat into silence now would be hypocritical. What's more, we are still seeing it pervasively, subliminally weaponised. As far as I am concerned, you either fight it or you are a part of it.</p>
47.		<p>Last time I was in this room I was goaded into making a comment about Scott's response to Brittany's allegations, despite the MC's stern warning that the topic was out of bounds. In the end I said, it shouldn't take having children to have a conscience and also having children doesn't guarantee a conscience.</p>
48.		<p>Not long afterward, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet conducted a review into the National Australia Day Council's selection process for the Australian of the Year Awards, a transparent intimidation tactic designed to rattle the cage of an organisation whose funding mostly comes from the federal government. The Australian of the Year Awards program is an institution. So too is our Parliament. So too is democracy. I respect that wholeheartedly. But politicians, like all individuals, are fallible, human, and although we, the people, elect them as per the institution of democracy to be our leaders, our examples, it is ultimately up to them what they choose to be examples of, whether they respect the privilege and purpose of this power or whether they abuse it at our expense.</p>

49.		<p>They may either be constructive or destructive but every single one of them is, inarguably, replaceable, like me. So why put my reputation on the line? Because when we act with integrity the tide rises with us. When we act with integrity we set a more esteemed bar for those who take our place. In any event, I would rather go down as a disappointment to an institution than sell out as a pandering, political puppet to the corrupt forces that coercively control it.</p>
50.		<p>Repeatedly this year I have seen the patterns of deception and deceit performed by predators mimicked in our halls of power. And that's just it, the federal government's approach to social issues seems to consist of nothing but empty announcements, placatory platitudes, superficial last minute acknowledgements, and carefully staged photo ops, facades and false hope, reviews, reports, delays and distractions, if not downright denials; all deliberate spin tactics designed to satiate the press and the general public.</p>
51.		<p>And so, I conclude with something, hopefully, more constructive to take away. I conclude with three key asks to better our nation. The first is for a government that takes the issue of abuse, in all its forms, seriously. In regards to the sexual abuse of children and others, there can be no progress without accountability, as Brittany said. Unless our leaders take full responsibility for their own failings, abuse culture will continue to thrive inside parliament, setting a corrupt standard for the rest of the nation. It rots from the top. And by full responsibility, I mean proactive, preventative measures, not these reactive, band-aid, electioneering stunts like acknowledging past harm at the last minute. If you don't take a strong stance to condemn abuse, you enable it. Lest I mention the symbolism of promoting an alleged rapist, protecting him from an independent inquiry, and then allowing him to receive a million dollars worth of anonymous donations to pay his personal legal fees.</p>
52.		<p>The second ask is for adequate funding to be actually implemented, not just announced or committed to, for prevention education to stop all of this before it actually starts.</p>
53.		<p>The federal government is prepared to spend over 90 billion taxpayer dollars on submarines that 'might' be ready by 2040 to combat a 'potential' off-shore threat; \$2.4 billion of that has already been wasted; gone.</p>

54.		Now, compare that to what they're prepared to spend on the very real epidemic of violence against women and children affecting one in four today here at home; just \$1.1 billion in total. And if we just single out prevention education, which is where the real hope for change is, the numbers are even sadder.
55.		In 2019 the federal government announced it would spend just \$2.8 million over a three year period, delivering a sexual and domestic violence prevention education program in schools called <i>Respect Matters</i> , but in reality, less than half of that amount was given, without explanation.
56.		As my friend Shanna Bremner, founder of <i>End Rape on Campus in Australia</i> , pointed out, there's around four million students enrolled in schools across the nation, according to the ABS.
57.		So, from 2020 until 2022, if you divide the \$1.36 million they actually gave by four million students, it works out that the federal government had planned to spend 11 cents per student per year on prevention education; 11 cents per student. This is because we currently have a government that is primarily concerned with short sighted votes based funding, not with long term needs based funding. And what we need in order to create real change, is meaningful investment in our children, in their education, because they are the future of our nation.
58.		<p>And the third ask is for national, consistent, legislative change. Still today, perpetrators of abuse find safety in outdated, inconsistent legislation, which both protects them and perpetuates social ignorance. For example, the man who abused me, who I spoke about before, was convicted of maintaining a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 17. In other jurisdictions this exact same offence was called 'the persistent sexual abuse of a child'. The former charge implies consent, while the latter reflects the gravity and the truth of an unlawful criminal act committed against an innocent child victim.</p> <p>Piece by piece we must correct the narrative and take control away from abusers who have for so long sought solace in our systems and institutions that shield them from the full extent of what they've done. These changes are achievable.</p>
59.		The <i>#LetHerSpeak</i> campaign, created and run by Nina Furnell, led to Tasmania not only reforming its gag law, but also the wording of the offence to 'persistent child sexual abuse'. And, as a direct result of the

		Grace Tame Foundation's <i>Harmony</i> campaign to create greater consistency between the state and territories on sexual assault legislation, this week the ACT's Attorney-General, Shane Rattenbury, is introducing the Family Violence Legislation Amendment Bill to the Legislative Assembly.
60.		One of the key amendments in the bill, which we called for on the 12th of November, is to change the name of the offence 'sexual relationship with a child' to 'persistent sexual abuse of a child', and that's because of our work.
61.		Now, whilst I commend the ACT on overhauling these laws, we need to ensure that every state and territory adopts the best practice model of not only the charge itself, but the complete wording of the legislation.
62.		Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia have all adopted the wording of 'persistent sexual abuse'. But Victoria and Western Australia are the only two jurisdictions in which the word 'relationship' does not appear anywhere in the body of the legislation. We still have so much work to do. It's all well and good to change hearts and minds with our conversations, but without structural change we will continue to be at the mercy of systems that override them.
63.		Now, let me restate those three key asks. The first is for a government that takes the issue of abuse in all its forms seriously. The second is for the implementation of adequate funding for prevention education to stop these things before they even start. The third is for national, consistent, structural change. We still have so much work to do.
64.		But in saying all of this, before we end today, we mustn't forget how far we've come. In just 12 short months we've collectively shifted the dial towards survivor voices. We have amplified lived experience to unprecedented levels and, in doing so, restored courage and hope back to a previously disempowered community. We are on the path to achieving nationwide safety, equity, and respect. An advocate is only as powerful as their supporters.
65.		You see me here standing tall, if a little bit broken; standing on the shoulders of giants. Side by side with Brittany. Side by side with all of you. Together, making change, making history but, above all else, making noise.
66.	L Tingle	I'd start the questions by observing that you've both found yourselves as sort of unwitting or unexpected spokespeople for, as you say, communities that haven't had a voice, and for issues that haven't had a voice.

67.		Brittany, you've talked about the National Action Plan and the problem isn't that it doesn't aim low, that it's too lofty and vague.
68.		And, Grace, you've talked about the things that need to be done, starting with the fact that we need a government that takes this seriously. So we are about to have an election campaign. We've got the Minister for Women here today and the leader of the opposition. If there were a couple of things that you think, really specific things that should be on the agenda and it sort of suddenly strikes me, you know, like a slap in the face that it's extraordinary that this doesn't seem to be an election issue, you know, clearly defined yet, what is it that you would say to the major political parties or, indeed, anybody running for government in a couple of months' time that we should be doing to address the sorts of problems we've got?
69.	G Tame	Mm, I got a list of one of them.
70.	L Tingle	You did. But what does a government that takes it seriously look like?
71.	B Higgins	I mean I think it starts, it starts from the top. So I guess if you can model the correct behaviour within your own workplace, it drives it forward and it puts the onus onto other businesses even, and across Australia to actually take the issue seriously.
72.		We saw the Kate Jenkins <i>Respect at Work</i> report and, you know, we shot down the positive duty which would have forced employers to actually take... You know, have a responsibility for the safety of their employees from sexual harassment, and that was just something that was blown away and noted but it's never been brought up again. We talk extensively about the Jenkins review but what about every other workplace in the country.
73.		And so I'm shocked that that was not more of a flashpoint moment for people to go, this isn't just about parliament, this isn't just about, you know, the gallery within Parliament House. That was an issue that would have impacted every single working woman in the country and we just kind of let that moment slide by without blinking. So I definitely think that's worthy of being on the agenda, of being talked about, of being discussed and I know obviously it's a nuanced issue] because if it's a small business, what does that look like. But there needs, there needs to be reform in that space and that's definitely something that I would say off the top of my head that matters.

74.	G Tame	And as Kate herself said, it's not something that you can cherry-pick; it's a package deal, implement the whole thing. Simple as that.
75.	L Tingle	Karen Middleton has our first question.
76.	K Middleton	Thank you. Karen Middleton from <i>The Saturday Paper</i> . Thank you both for your addresses and for your advocacy. I know there are many people, including in that building up the hill, who have not been in a position to speak out and who very much appreciate that you and others have done so.
77.		I have a question for each of you. Ms Tame, you now have the most notorious side-eye in the nation. And I feel like, based on your speech, that we now understand a bit better why but I don't want to be gaslighting, misquoting or doing any of that, or for any of us to do that, so am I correct in understanding that that was why you... That what you told us in terms of the call you received was why you chose to turn up at The Lodge and gave Mr Morrison exactly that look. And I wonder, can you tell us what you told that person who rang you when they said what they said to you.
78.		And, Ms Higgins, the Deputy Prime Minister's leaked views about the Prime Minister that were dated from last year came from a message that was forwarded to you. Can you tell us, did you get the agreement of the person who forwarded that, to release it and, either way, can you tell us why you chose to release it at this particular time, in your words. Thank you very much.
79.	G Tame	My answer to your question is that I act with integrity. That's it.
80.	K Middleton	And are you able to tell us what you said back to that person or...?
81.	G Tame	Nope. Doesn't matter now, does it.
82.	B Higgins	Um, I... To answer your question, you know, I perceived that conversation to be between myself and the Deputy Prime Minister. I think it was a nuanced conversation about my own assault in Parliament House and whether or not the Prime Minister of the country knew about it. I think a lot of the nuance has been lost on the who and the knew and the whats and all that sort of thing but the context here is the... What he was implying was he didn't believe that the Prime Minister didn't know about my rape and I'm... It's flabbergasting to me that that's tolerated and that's been made okay and that's somehow been sidestepped in all of this when it's, you

		know, probably the most, the most important person in the country and, and to have... To have that be sidelined about, you know, the labels that he was, you know, flowing -- throwing around about the Prime Minister I think is pretty shocking, and a bit of a misstep. But, you know, you can't control media narratives and it is what it is.
83.	L Tingle	Katina Curtis.
84.	K Curtis	Katina Curtis from <i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i> and <i>The Age</i> . Ms Higgins, you said specifically about parliament, too little has changed, and then more generally around domestic violence and violence against women, we've seen the same stats, there's been failure over a decade.
85.		And, Ms Tame, you spoke about facades and false hope that we've seen, particularly over the past year but more generally. How do you keep up hope that the change that is needed will happen?
86.	B Higgins	I think I've been really buoyed by the support of women, you know, of conversations that I've had across the board, whether it's women in the gallery, women who used to be staffers, women who came before me, women who occupy positions of power but didn't feel like they were able to speak out or call out this issue because they felt like they were minimising their position by bringing up their gender in some way, and obviously that hasn't worked.
87.		We're at a point now where we're still having the same, you know, arguments and the same struggles and obviously I think we've kind of got like a new wave of women who are just not copping it and so to be buoyed by those voices and to have people stand behind you and go, no, this isn't okay and it's -- the time is now, let's band together. I think that's been a really powerful thing and that's what's kept me going in my darkest times, definitely.
88.	L Tingle	Olivia Caisley.
89.		Olivia Caisley from <i>The Oz</i> , thank you to you both. We're on the precipice of an election, as Laura identified. As campaigners and advocates, which party would be better for women? Are you working with either on any policies that would deliver the three asks you've made today? And can we expect to see you on the campaign trail and, if so, for which party?
90.	B Higgins	Please. [LOOKING AT GRACE TAME] I am stateless and partyless. I belong to no one. I am an island in and of myself. I kind of... Yeah, I don't

		really fit in anywhere. But I think we just need to listen to messaging as we get closer to the election about who's committed to actually doing something. You know, it's all well and good to serve out platitudes but it's about actual tangible commitments and timeframes, I think. I think timeframes are really important because it's all well and good to say something in an election cycle but, but, but when? When are you willing to commit to doing something and so, yeah, I will not be on a campaign trail whatsoever.
91.	G Tame	Permission to use a side-eye.
92.	O Caisley	Permission, of course.
93.	L Tingle	Julie Hare
94.	J Hare	Julie Hare from <i>The Australian Financial Review</i> , and I'm on the board of directors of the National Press Club. Thank you both very much for a very interesting and, may I say, entertaining talks.
95.		I look around the room and I can see very few men. I also note that of the 22 journalists asking questions today, only one is a man. Is this a sign that sexual abuse is still seen as a fringe issue by the men in our community and, on that issue, has corporate Australia reached out to either of you?
96.	B Higgins	I would say, I think it's noteworthy that we have, you know, other than the wonderful David Crowe, I can't see very many male bureau chiefs here and that's just an observation, it's not a judgement on any of the women here. I know you're incredible journalists and you guys have spearheaded this story this entire year, so I'm very grateful to you all.
97.		But, no, I think there has been a perception that, to an extent, that it is a women's issue and it should be. Whether it's a sensitivity thing, I'm not saying it's entirely out of a place of them not particularly caring about the issue but it's a conversation they don't feel comfortable in participating in, but I think it is very telling, just the numbers in the room and who seems to care about the issue or at least to be vocal about caring about the issue, definitely.
98.	G Tame	Yeah, on that, to expand on what I was saying in my speech, it's certainly been a difficult thing that I've encountered throughout the year. I mean I've done a lot of speeches for corporates and spoken a lot, 'cause I've

		specifically... You know, child sexual abuse is more my wheelhouse; sexual assault, less so. And that is a much less gendered issue. You know, and I speak with a lot of men actually and, in fact, early on when I was finding my voice and actually before I had a public voice, it was men who I was relating to first and it was the stories of male survivors of clergy abuse who I was relating to. Before I actually ever spoke to any women who had been abused as children, it was all men that I spoke to. It was all men who'd been groomed. I'd never heard of any women who'd been groomed. So, yeah, I actually found it really odd to enter this space and it be really gendered.
99.		So I think it's actually quite sad... and like I was talking about this division that's projected onto causes and the fighting and the hatred that I see. It really distresses me because, yeah, it's not about that, it's about, you know, human beings and, you know, if we take away whatever the form of division is, whether it's gender or whatever it may be, you know, it's about abuse of power and that's what we have to remember. Men are not the enemy, it's abuse of power, it's behaviour. It's behaviour is the enemy.
100.	J Hare	Thank you so much.
101.	L Tingle	Lisa Wilkinson.
102.	L Wilkinson	How bizarre that I have nothing to say.
103.	L Tingle	Okay, well we'll... Yeah, okay. Sorry. Sam Maiden.
104.	S Maiden	Samantha Maiden from News.com.au. Thank you both for speaking to us today. Two questions. When you first came and sat in my living room, January 2 nd , 2021, one of the things that we talked about was Rachelle Miller and your reflections on listening to those women being disparaged in the corridors of power after Louise Milligan's <i>Four Corners</i> program came out. I was wondering if you have any reflections on what that was like, to sit in that office and what was said?
105.		And then I've got a questions for Grace as well, if I may. So, I'll ask that next, if that's okay.
106.	B Higgins	Yeah, yeah, yeah, of course. Um... Oh, it was deeply traumatic. Not everyone in the Cash office knew about it, obviously only the minister and my chief of staff at the time were kind of aware of the assault. So no one

		else was kind of privy to it, so they spoke quite freely about the Rachelle Miller, which I'm very sorry about.
107.		And it was very disparaging. It was this idea that like, you know, she was a disgruntled staffer and it was this very negative connotation that it was this woman who just couldn't hack it and I saw so much of myself in her story and in her lived experience and even the year before that in Chelsea Potter and Dania Mahoney; it was this re-traumatizing thing of this idea that these women were letting down the team and this frenetic gossip that went around the building that they were talking about and it really deeply impacted me, to the point in which that's why I think I'm here today, because of the bravery of those women coming before me, a hundred percent. I heard you.
108.		You made such a difference in my life and it just spurred me into this place of... It's just so wrong, the way they treated you and... Yeah, it was a massive driving force but, no, when I sat in your lounge room on the 2 nd of January, I had no idea we'd be here, so it's very strange.
109.	S Maiden	All right. Well, I don't want to hog the questions. This may come up later
110.	B Higgins	Yeah, Yeah
111.	S Maiden	-- but what I wanted to ask you, if you have any reflections later is --
112.	B Higgins	Yeah.
113.	S Maiden	-- the media asks a lot of women like you and survivors to tell their stories and that drives change but it also has an incredible human toll on you. You've spoken, particularly Grace Tame has spoken very powerfully about how on earth to balance that because you need to tell your story but it's also re-traumatizing all the time, so if you had any reflections on that as well.
114.	G Tame	Mm. Um... Yes, well I'm very lucky in that I am surrounded by very close family, many of whom are here today. Shout out to my mum and my dad and my stepmum. And my cousin and my mum's cousin and, well, all of us are here, and my partner Max though, number one. He's over there. [POINTS TO MAX] Max, who put up with me when my emotions get all disregulated. Um, yeah, and you know, to take time out and stay connected to meaningful values. But it's all for a... You know, it's all for a greater purpose and it's, you know, as Brittany speaks about, it's so that other people don't have to do this, you know, and that's why I'm so... You know, the highest priority for me

		is prevention. You know, we see so much weight put on, you know, reaction, responses, covering things up, you know, the band-aids on things. Stop it at the start. Yes, it is a long term investment and it's really difficult, you know, and it's much easier to just sort of cover things up as they happen, but if we stop it before it happens then we don't have to do all this, you know. That's, that's what it's about and so, you know, if I can make these sacrifices and Brittany can make these sacrifices and, honestly, you know, we need more diversity in the conversation. I think there's a lot lacking there. We need to hear from First Nations women, we need to hear from women with disabilities, we need to hear from more men obviously but, you know, if we can do this so that it doesn't -- there don't have to be people re-traumatised all the time, then it's worth it, a hundred times over.
115.	L Tingle	Sorry, I'll just signal that we're planning to continue with the broadcast till about 1:45 today to get in as many questions as possible but the main ABC channel will leave us at 1:30, but you can continue to watch on ABC 24 and Sky. Our next question is from Shuba Krishnan.
116.	S Krishnan	Shuba Krishnan, SBS World News. You both have had vulnerable, many vulnerable people contacting you both. When you look at the debate over gay, lesbian and trans students, do you think the parliament is doing enough to protect their rights?
117.	G Tame	No. Why does one group of people have more of a right to be themselves than another? That's why I have to ask the government.
118.	B Higgins	And I think there has to be a real sensitive -- a sensitivity afforded in the dialogue. I know that like around the referendum a lot of people were deeply re-traumatised by that whole conversation, so I just... Obviously I am not a journalist but I just implore sensitivity of everyone when having these discussions because these are people's lives and these are people's identities and it's, it's a deeply triggering and difficult time for them. So I can't even imagine how they'd be feeling having to listen to all this play out right now.
119.	G Tame	Exactly.
120.	L Tingle	Rob Scott.
121.	R Scott	Rob Scott from the Seven Network. Thanks to both of you for your address today. I wanted to ask, you've both detailed terrible experiences with politics and you've made it pretty clear at this stage, neither of you want to

		pursue a career in politics, but politics needs strong female voices to drive change from within. So what advice would you give to women looking to pursue a career in politics and, on that, the Liberal Party is yet to impose gender quotas. Do you think that that would make a difference and what do you say to those people who are holding that back?
122.	B Higgins	Quotas is like a dirty word to the Liberal Party. I don't know how you cross that bridge. I genuinely think it would make a significant difference. I think there's an obsession on merit based selection, to the point where it's sort of detrimental and counterintuitive and we're shutting out women from the conversation and I don't know how you can ever rectify that, it's just so ingrained.
123.		But there definitely needs to be more young women in politics. It is... It was the most fulfilling job I ever had; I loved it. I would encourage every woman who is interested in policy or national debate to get involved because I fundamentally believe post-Jenkins review that it will be a safer workplace. But not only that, it is the most incredible job you'll ever have. So if you're interested, I wholeheartedly... I endorse it with every piece of my being; there's nothing like it.
124.	L Tingle	Nour Haydar
125.	N Haydar	Nour Haydar from ABC News. Thank you both for your speeches and for your advocacy. I have a question for both of you that sort of follows up on what Rob asked. Grace, when you stood on this stage a year ago, you gave a very resounding no when you were asked about whether or not you'd ever pursue politics. Is that still the case now? And can you elaborate on why? Is it because you believe you can achieve more change outside government structures? And, Brittany, you've also previously described your job or your former job as being your dream job. Do you ever see yourself returning to parliament in any sort of capacity?
126.	G Tame	Well my answer is still no, although Kim Beazley did try to sway me. He's very convincing. Took about 20 minutes. But, no, I wouldn't. And, yes, it's because I feel like I can achieve more change outside of politics. Very happy to work with you all outside.
127.	B Higgins	Um... Uh, as I was kind of saying before, it is an incredible job. I just... I don't think there's a very natural intuitive fit anymore and I think a lot of, a

		lot of water's gone under that bridge. So, I just... I can't... Unless I've got some more life experience or maybe some space and time, I just can't see it being feasible, but it is an incredible job.
128.	N Haydar	Thank you.
129.	L Tingle	Eliza Edwards
130.	E Edwards	Thank you both for your speech. Eliza Edwards from Nine News. Brittany, you said that Barnaby Joyce's text messages implied the Prime Minister knew about your alleged rape before he said he did. Do you believe that too, and with the Gaetjens review on pause and an election around the corner, do you have any confidence that you'll get the answers you want?
131.		And also to Grace, the threatening call from last year from a member of a government funded organisation, are you willing to name the individual or the organisation? Thank you.
132.	B Higgins	I never want to cast aspersions on, particularly obviously on the Prime Minister, on what he could have possibly known in that context and I do have to be careful in this space. But, I have been very forthcoming in my belief about sort of certain individuals within his team absolutely knowing. But, you know, there's obviously a process in place and the justice system takes priority, as it should and after that, you know, I'm not entirely... I don't really have all that much faith that the Gaetjens review will ever kind of come to be, but I've made peace with that to an extent, just knowing the way... I've made peace with that, I guess, to an extent, as much as humanly possible. Yeah.
133.	E Edwards	And, Grace, are you willing to name the organisation or the individual?
134.	G Tame	I reckon if I was willing to name either, I would have put them in the speech.
135.	L Tingle	Just one other announcement as we go. We have a lot of MPs and senators here today who will have to leave at 1:45 sharp for Question Time. So, I'm just letting the audience at home know that that's the case, so they don't think there's a mass walk out of the audience. The next question is from Andrea Crothers.
136.	A Crothers	We had Olivia... Andrea Crothers, sorry, Sky News. We had Olivia touch on the election just before. You've both made it clear of your disapproval of Scott Morrison's handling of this particular issue. Is there anything that you

		specifically think Anthony Albanese would do better and what would it mean if Australians chose to vote Scott Morrison back in?
137.	G Tame	All Anthony would have to do is none of the things that Scott's done.
138.	B Higgins	I don't know how to follow that up. Um... Um, I mean ultimately it comes down to the Australian people to look at the track records and see what they feel most comfortable with. I mean, you know, naturally I have a position but I think people can make their own judgements. They've seen the headlines over the past year and if they're satisfied, then that's absolutely their right and their call, but I'm not here to cast any of my personal opinions out onto anyone else. Yeah.
139.	L Tingle	Karen Barlow.
140.	K Barlow	Karen Barlow from <i>The Canberra Times</i> . Thanks very much for your addresses today. Australians have a choice at the election, two blokes. One of them is here. [POINTS TOWARDS ANTHONY ALBANESE] Yesterday you had apologies in the house from male party leaders. Although you've ruled out entering politics at this time, and I'm not asking about that, I'm asking, with that in mind and politics being so on the nose at the moment, [SIGHS] and this isn't even just asking about what up and coming female political leaders, what advice would you give them? What can we do about politics? What can we do?
141.	B Higgins	I think when I was a very young staffer, I think there's a whole sort of induction process that's missing. You don't realise the role of advisors or the public don't realise the role of advisors, that they play in politics, and it's a really pivotal role. So it's a very tight-knit team of about 12 people and on average they all kind of tend to be under the age of 40, and people are kind of... I was personally shocked when, you know, for example, the advisor who runs our F35 program, which is our jets, has never been in the military and is, I think, still under the age of 30, and I think it's quite shocking when people kind of come to terms, when you realise that. I think there just needs to be more of an induction, training, more of a cohesive relationship with the public service instead of this kind of two tiered system where it goes ministerial staffers, public service. There is this very upstairs/downstairs like relationship between the two at the moment and I don't know exactly when that came into play but it's definitely something that's present at the moment and that I think is fundamentally problematic for Australia as -- going forward, I think. It needs reform in some way,

		shape or form. I'm probably not the best person to comment on how though.
142.	A Crothers	Grace, do you have any views about the state we're in at the moment?
143.	G Tame	Oh come on, I've said a lot about all of that. I'm good.
144.	L Tingle	Georgia Moore.
145.		Georgie Moore from <i>Australian Associated Press</i> . Thank you so much for speaking and your advocacy that has come at a great cost for both of you over the past year. If I may, I have a question for Ms Tame, and I also have a question for Ms Higgins.
146.		Ms Tame, and you canvassed this in your address. You last year met with the country's AGs to lobby to make the age of consent, the definition of child sexual abuse offences and the definition of sexual intercourse uniform –
147.	G Tame	Mm-hm.
148.	G Moore	-- across states and territories. The ACT government has listened.
149.	G Tame	Mm-hm.
150.	G Moore	How confident are you that you can get other jurisdictions to not just say, yes, that's a good idea, we'll think about it, but actually change and implement change. Are you worried that some states might simply wait to see if the moment and the momentum passes and let it fade into the background and instead focus on issues that they see as more pressing?
151.		And for Ms Higgins, are you able to take us through how you felt, what ran through your head when you sat in the house yesterday as the Prime Minister delivered his acknowledgement and apology?
152.	G Tame	Thanks Georgie. No, I'm not actually worried. I'm actually really quite excited because the Grace Tame Foundation is actually launching a campaign. We're calling it <i>Stop Romanticising Child Abuse</i> and the ACT introducing this reform is the sort of the start of the ball rolling, really, and it's not a huge reform to achieve; it's quite simple and we can, I suppose, use federalism to our advantage in that it creates competition with the jurisdictions. You know, one jurisdiction does something and all the other jurisdictions go, ooh, crap, we better do that too. So, yeah, that's what

		we're doing at the moment and, like I said, all of these things are actually quite simple and there's an appetite for it at the moment, these changes in this area of sexual assault legislation.
153.		New South Wales especially is making huge headway and Victoria is sort of chasing behind with consent legislation. So there's a lot of hope there. I'm not too worried about them lagging. Yeah.
154.	G Moore	And Ms Higgins.
155.	B Higgins	I guess I try and remove myself as much as possible when viewing the progress of the Jenkins review. Like I try to step back. So on behalf of every other staffer who had been through a traumatic experience, and there are many of us, I know I just happen to be the one sitting on stage but you could replace with me like a dozen other people. I felt an enormous moment of grief obviously; I was quite emotional and upset, but I recognise the significance and the importance of it. So I was grateful in the moment that it was happening. I was grateful that it was happening with multi-party support, that Mr Anthony Albanese decided to participate, that we had the Greens, that we had Zali Steggall and it was... It just... It was deeply emotional in a way that I wasn't anticipating and I think being in that room kind of made all the difference. This is why I'm so grateful, that I have that opportunity to be there because it made it so much more tangible to not see these people as, you know, flattened characters on a TV screen like I've watched most of this year play out, but to see that -- be there in person in the chamber and to feel it, it made it very different. Yeah, it was definitely... It was very emotional.
156.	G Moore	Thank you so much.
157.	L Tingle	Clare Armstrong.
158.	C Armstrong	<p>Clare Armstrong from <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>. Thanks so much to both of you for being here today.</p> <p>To Brittany, last week I stood here and asked the Prime Minister what he thought made parliament safer today than it was 12 months ago, and one of the things he cited was the implementation of an independent complaints process; obviously something that didn't exist for you when you went through your experience. I'm wondering if you could reflect on how that might have changed your experience had that existed at the time and, more broadly, I'd love to hear Grace's reflection on this as well, what you think the impact of</p>

		there being consequences for action can have on changing a culture? Obviously in the issues around child sexual abuse you've got the court system, whereas this complaints mechanism in parliament is more designed to show that there will be consequences for bullying, harassment and other poor behaviours.
159.	B Higgins	Yeah, I mean to an extent I think it would have been helpful for me in my circumstances, a ministerial staffer, but I'm cognisant that at the moment that it is very limited. It's only for serious complaints or what is deemed by a certain small team as serious complaints and it's not an all of parliament mechanism. So it is still quite limited in scope. And so, yes, I think it definitely would have helped in my situation because, you know, back when it occurred, in 2019, there was essentially to what I perceived as very little to nothing. So I think it would have been helpful but, no, I don't think it goes far enough and that's why I fully endorse Kate Jenkins' recommendation of having a full, a more fulsome version, an extended version of what's been started by the Foster review. So it's a step but it's not finalised in any way, shape or form but I acknowledge that it would have likely assisted.
160.	C Armstrong	Just on the impact of consequences and changing culture and behaviour, if you have thoughts.
161.	G Tame	Sorry, can you ask me the first part of the question again though, 'cause you asked... You said you asked... You asked the Prime Minister if he thinks it's a safer workplace in Parliament now...
162.	C Armstrong	Oh sorry, just... Oh... Having a system that delivers consequences, a complaints mechanism that would have outcomes, do you think that something like that can change the culture of a workplace?
163.	G Tame	Yes, if it actually works but as I understand, like Brittany said, it's very limited in scope and, um... Like it's only... Like if the person actually deems it to be serious enough that an action will be taken further. So it's, you know, the power is still not... The person who has made the complaint still doesn't actually have very much power over the situation.
164.	B Higgins	Yeah, and I think there needs to be a delineation as well between, you know, workplace sexual harassment, as well sexual assault, that should be taken through eventually, hopefully, through the justice process but there's definitely obviously, as there is in, you know, the Workplace Health and Safety legislation and all that sort of stuff, there is a provision where you do need to account for sexual harassment in the workplace and as an

		employee you do have a duty of care and a responsibility to look after your staff and I think that's what's lacking in parliament. But, yeah, there's definitely the two tiered systems but I think there's room for both.
165.	G Tame	And I do love the part where you asked the Prime Minister if he thought it was a safer workplace, you know, because he's about 6'3" in my understanding, he's built like a, you know. It's got to be safer for him.
166.	C Armstrong	I wasn't asking it with...
167.	G Tame	Oh okay. Yeah, I misunderstood that bit.
168.	L Tingle	I'm afraid we're really out of time. Please thank Grace Tame and Brittany Higgins.