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Latest harassment allegations at workplaces, private colleges concerning

The Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Anna Cody, has spoken out on the crucial role employers and institutions hold to end the normalisation of harmful behaviour and improve women's safety, amid an influx of allegations of workplace sexual harassment and of dangerous hazing at private colleges.

Following a 2018 investigation into Sydney University's St Paul's College, led by former Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, disturbing allegations have emerged this week claiming 'humiliation-type behaviours' among a group of male students. Separately, hospitality giant Merivale has faced claims of sexual harassment, exploitation and drug use at its high-profile Sydney venues.

Dr Cody credited last year's introduction of a positive duty on Australian workplaces as a critical step forward towards eliminating harmful behaviours, but she believes far more work needs to be done to ensure widespread compliance.

"The recent allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination in Australia's hospitality industry are deeply troubling and highlight how important it is that Australian workplaces implement the positive duty in a way that works for them," Dr Cody said.

"Senior leaders play a vital role in creating a culture of respect, accountability, and inclusion. When leaders visibly uphold these values, they set an example that resonates throughout their organisations.

"These recent reports serve as a powerful reminder to employers across industries that workplace safety and respect must be actively championed from the top down."

"It is also essential we have men and women in leadership and people from a range of race and cultural backgrounds so that new, respectful work and study cultures can be created.

"We all have a role in this effort to create a safer, more respectful Australia where everyone can live free from violence and discrimination, with respect and dignity."

ENDS | Media contact: media@humanrights.gov.au or **0457 281 897**