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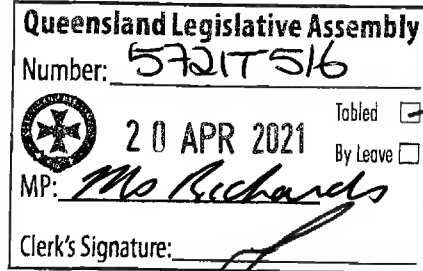
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Politics

A non-politician would be sacked on the spot. Andrew Laming gets a year's notice

How much more damage can the disgraced and disgraceful MP do in 12 months? The PM's paper-thin majority means that's not his concern.

CHARLIE LEWIS MAR 29, 2021 54



(IMAGE: TOM RED/PRIVATE MEDIA)

In some ways, Andrew Laming represents the government's broader trouble with assault and misogyny in the halls of Parliament.

The flurry of revelations that followed Brittany Higgins coming forward about her alleged rape proved that the prime minister cannot simply wait out these kinds of issues. And the same is true with Laming. It's become increasingly clear there will always be at least one more allegation, one more scandal, concerning the disgraced member for Bowman.

The revelation on the weekend that Laming had



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OPINION

6:00am, Apr 9, 2021 Updated: 6:27am, Apr 9

Madonna King: Dear Andrew Laming, I've written your resignation letter for you



Madonna King takes the liberty of writing Andrew Laming's resignation letter.

Photo: TND



Madonna King

OPINION

SHARE



Andrew Laming needs to hand in his resignation letter. Here's one penned by Madonna King that might help him out.



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you are now copping.

God knows, I've copped my share over the years.

Even before you took over, I had the Australian Federal Police make a "routine" visit over Parliamentary entitlements.

I was cleared, of course. Now the Australian Electoral Commission is having a gander over **dozens of Facebook pages** some claim I operate under the guise of community and education groups.

Don't we fund these jokers? You should have a look at that, Scott. I mean I'm doing my job for the voters of Bowman – especially the Liberal ones – and they're chasing around after me, like I'm some sort of small-town criminal.

I have a medical degree, for God's sake. A specialist's qualification in ophthalmology! Three Masters' degrees, including one from Harvard. And these dills think I shouldn't be on Facebook?

Mind you, you have to be careful what you say if you use your own name on social media. I've now learnt that lesson several times.

The first time was almost a decade ago, in 2013, when Indigenous Australians and Pacific Islanders clashed in Logan, near Brisbane.

All I said was: "*Mobs tearing up Logan tonight. Did any of them do a day's work today, or was it business as usual and welfare on tap?*"



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A year later, and it was a picture that got me in trouble. I simply joined in Australia Day celebrations by showing off one of my many talents – skolling a beer, while doing a handstand.

Imagine Albo standing on his head! The problem with Labor is they're all boring. Most of them wouldn't know how to skol a beer.

Anyway, people misunderstood the whole 'entertainment' factor, simply because earlier that week I was opposing reduced licensing hours and asked, on Facebook again: "*Why should idiots remove my right to stay out late celebrating a special occasion?*"

Is there a school for 'context', because surely that's as important as empathy.

In retrospect, Snapchat might have been better than Facebook. Apparently what you say there disappears after 24 hours or something?

Or TikTok, because I like to vibe with the young voters.

Like the time in 2016, when I spent 11 hours on the Facebook page 'The Simpsons Against the Liberals'. It was just a simple remark I made about having fewer PE teachers ...

Most teachers vote Labor anyway. I proved that a few Januarys ago, when I asked whether teachers were back at work, or whether they were "still 'lesson planning' from home?"

The Indigenous love Labor too. I tried to teach them otherwise, when I was working up in the NT as a doctor. But I've given up



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Indigenous. I wonder if there's a school for 'nuance'?

And now I'm accused of **targeting two women on Facebook**, like I'm sexist or something.

Do these muppets know I also hold a diploma in obstetrics and gynaecology from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists?

Doesn't that prove I understand women, Scott? And I know you do too, and that's why I'm so empathetic – that's the adjective from empathy – over what you are going through with this whole **Brittany Higgins saga**.

Mind you, if you are going to contact her, don't do it on Facebook. It's so easy to be misunderstood there.

Good luck at the next election Scott. I'll be rooting for you, from my new medical digs.

But if you want someone to run your social media campaign, I know someone with heaps of experience ...

Yours,

Andrew Laming

Topics: Andrew Laming Australian Politics

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Woman makes formal complaint to police about Andrew Laming allegedly taking photo of her bending over

7:30 / By Michael Atkin and Myles Wearing

Posted Tue 30 Mar 2021 at 2:01pm, updated Tue 30 Mar 2021 at 10:14pm



Liberal MP Andrew Laming is on medical leave and will be undergoing empathy training. (ABC News: Jed Cooper)

A woman has made a formal complaint to Queensland Police about Liberal MP Andrew Laming for allegedly taking a photo of her while she was bending over.

The ABC understands the woman, Crystal White, went back to police on Tuesday and has provided additional information, which included making the complaint.

In a statement, a spokesperson for Queensland Police confirmed it had now received the formal complaint.

"A formal complaint has now been received from a 29-year-old woman in regards to an alleged matter which occurred in 2019. This matter is being assessed by detectives from Cleveland," the statement said.

Crystal White claimed Dr Laming took the photo of her while she was filling a fridge at a landscaping business in Brisbane in 2019.

On Monday, Ms White told Channel 9 after attending Cleveland Police Station, "I've documented the incident for now and that's all I want to say."

Key points:

- Crystal White alleges Andrew Laming took a photo of her while she was bending over in 2019
- Dr Laming has disputed the nature of the photo, saying his goal was to show a "challenging work situation"
- Ms White has made a formal complaint to police about the matter

Her colleague, Sean Blinco, told 7.30 he also spoke to police on Monday.

"I made a statement with facts that I have access to — dates, times, conversations, etc that Crystal no longer has access to [in our data entry logs]."

'Goal was to show a challenging work situation'



Sean Blinco says this is the fridge Crystal White was filling when Andrew Laming took a photo of her. (Supplied: Sean Blinco)

Dr Laming has apologised over the photograph but disputed the nature of the image.

"The photograph was of her in a completely dignified position, in no way compromised, doing a very hard job well in full view of every customer," he told ABC Radio on Monday.

On Sunday, Dr Laming also said, "What I saw was an incredibly hardworking employee who was simply kneeling in normal work attire and stacking a fridge with an impossible amount of soft drink cans ... That was my goal, was to show a challenging work situation."

Mr Blinco told 7.30 it was the store manager who saw Dr Laming take the photo.

"He saw the phone directed at Crystal while she was bent over or bending over to fill up a drinks fridge, and Cameron then asked Andrew to have a look at his phone and saw what was on there, and asked Andrew Laming to delete the photo," Mr Blinco said.

"The photo showed Crystal bending over and her underwear exposed over the top of her shorts that she was wearing."

Mr Blinco said Ms White also saw the photo on Dr Laming's phone.

Laming on medical leave



Sean Blinco says he spoke to police about Andrew Laming. (Supplied: Sean Blinco)



Calls for Andrew Laming to stand down from parliament. (Michael Atkin)

Last week, two other women went public in interviews with Channel 9 alleging Dr Laming engaged in aggressive behaviour online.

Dr Laming said he unreservedly apologised to both women.

The MP announced he would leave politics at the next election and would immediately be going on medical leave and undergoing empathy training.

Senior government ministers have resisted calls for Dr Laming to be sacked.

In a statement, the LNP said: "Dr Laming's behaviour has not met the standards required of LNP members, and we support the Prime Minister's direction to seek and undertake professional assistance."

7.30 requested an interview with Dr Laming and sent questions to his office on Monday but did not receive a response.

7.30 contacted Dr Laming and his office on Tuesday for a response in relation to the information reported to Queensland Police but has not received a response.

News Opinion Sport Culture Lifestyle



Andrew Laming

AEC to investigate Liberal MP Andrew Laming over network of Facebook pages that promote LNP

Sarah Martin

@msmarto

Wed 7 Apr 2021 12.28 AEST

The Australian Electoral Commission will investigate Liberal National MP Andrew Laming for potential breaches of electoral laws over more than 30 Facebook pages he operates under the guise of community and education groups.

Laming, who is currently on leave after reports emerged about his mistreatment of women, faces a fine of up to \$26,000 for a breach of the authorisation requirements if he is found to have broken the Commonwealth Electoral Act.

As reported by Guardian Australia on Tuesday, Laming has set up dozens of Facebook pages under the guise of community and news groups, including one that poses as an education institute.

Following the reports, a spokesperson from the Australian Electoral Commission said the behaviour of the MP would be investigated.

“A key purpose of the authorisation laws is to allow voters to know who is communicating,” the AEC said.

“With regard to the Facebook activity mentioned in [the] article published yesterday, I can confirm that we will be investigating the requirement for electoral authorisation.”

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According to the AEC, material requiring an authorisation statement needs to be deemed an “electoral matter”, with material that is communicated “for the dominant purpose of influencing the way electors vote in a federal election”.

“This includes, but is not limited to, a communication that expressly promotes or opposes a candidate, political party, member or senator.”

The disclosure laws, which were updated following the 2016 election, also explicitly include social media posts, requiring authorisation details either in the message or through the page’s biography details.

Guardian Australia revealed that the Facebook page operating as the Redland Bay Bulletin - which uses a similar name to the local news site the Redland City Bulletin - claimed to be a “community group”, but was set up by Laming in 2015. The page claimed it would “keep a close eye on politicians and their promises”.

“This page was created to provide an opportunity for you to communicate your likes and dislikes, advertise an event or your business. So share this page to fellow residents. Let’s see if we are noticed so that positive changes can be made,” the “about” page reads.

After one community resident complained about the page’s apparent LNP “propaganda”, one of the page’s administrators responded: “Yes this page was created by Andrew, but is now administered by several locals from the Redland Bay and Mount Cotton area”.

Another Facebook page used by Laming claims to be the fictitious Redlands Institute, a “forum for balanced discussion of major issues” which has been registered with

Facebook as an “education” group.

The Redlands Institute promotes stories casting doubt on climate science, calling it “apocalyptic environmentalism” and spreads anti-Labor and anti-Greens propaganda while linking to Laming’s official material.

Laming revealed his identity in comments on the page posted under the institute’s name, including by posting links to Facebook live events on his now deleted official page and asking page followers to ask him questions.

Laming has also revealed himself in comments on the Victoria Point News page and the Thornlands 4164 page, both of which have been set up as “community” pages.

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News Opinion Sport Culture Lifestyle



Andrew Laming Liberal MP Andrew Laming created dozens of Facebook pages to promote LNP and attack opponents

Sarah Martin

[@msmarto](#)

Tue 6 Apr 2021 14.54 AEST

The besieged Liberal National MP Andrew Laming operates more than 30 Facebook pages and profiles under the guise of community groups, including at least three masquerading as news pages, and another posing as an educational institute.

The Bowman MP, who is on leave from parliament to undertake empathy counselling following complaints about his behaviour towards women, uses the sites to promote political material and attack his Labor opponents through pages classified with Facebook as “community” and “news” groups. None of the pages include political authorisation disclosures.

Laming has announced he will quit politics at the next election, but the Morrison government has insisted he is a fit and proper person to sit on the government

benches, where the Coalition holds a one-seat majority.

As further revelations about his “extraordinary” behaviour emerge, Guardian Australia has confirmed that the Facebook page operating as the Redland Bay Bulletin - which uses a similar name to the local news site the Redland City Bulletin - was set up by Laming in October 2015 claiming to be a “community group”.

The page claims to “update the issues and keep a close eye on politicians and their promises” in the Redlands area, but posts frequent links to Liberal National party advertising and attacks on the Labor party, including state member Kim Richards.

“This page was created to provide an opportunity for you to communicate your likes and dislikes, advertise an event or your business. So share this page to fellow residents. Let’s see if we are noticed so that positive changes can be made,” the “about” page reads.

After one community resident complained about the page’s apparent LNP “propaganda”, one of the page’s administrators responded: “Yes this page was created by Andrew, but is now administered by several locals from the Redland Bay and Mount Cotton area.”

Another Facebook page used by Laming claims to be the fictitious Redlands Institute, a “forum for balanced discussion of major issues” which has been registered with Facebook as an “education” group.

The Redlands Institute promotes stories casting doubt on climate science, calling it “apocalyptic environmentalism” and spreads anti-Labor and anti-Greens propaganda while linking to Laming’s official material.

Laming revealed his identity in comments on the page posted under the institute’s name, including by posting links to Facebook live events on his now deleted official page and asking page followers to ask him questions.

Laming has also revealed himself in comments on the Victoria Point News page and the Thornlands 4164 page, both of which have been set up as “community” pages.

Guardian Australia understands that Laming has set up a community page for each suburb in his electorate without disclosing his political links to the sites, and operates about 35 from his Facebook account, which have garnered thousands of followers. His official Facebook page was shut down in the wake of allegations that he stalked two Brisbane women online.

Another page called “Redland Hospital: Let’s fight for fair funding,” was set up by Laming ahead of the last federal election to campaign against Labor, and while this is revealed in the page’s “About” information, it does not include any party branding or authorisation.

According to the Australian Electoral Commission, political authorisation is required for “information that is a matter communicated, or intended to be communicated, for the dominant purpose of influencing the way electors vote in a federal election”.

“This includes, but is not limited to, a communication that expressly promotes or opposes a candidate, political party, member or senator.”

The disclosure laws, which were updated following the 2016 election, also explicitly include social media posts, requiring authorisation details either in the message or through the page’s biography details.

The fresh revelations about Laming’s online behaviour come as prime minister Scott Morrison flags a potential crackdown on anonymous social media users, saying that reining in abuse perpetrated online is “a task for this decade”.

“We’ve worked closely with our colleagues internationally on disinformation, for example, which is all perpetrated overwhelmingly through social media, particularly in relation to the pandemic,” Morrison said last week.

“I think the problem with social media is it is much less social good these days and much more social harm.”

Amid concern about the impact of anonymous trolling online, the government is also considering a recommendation from a parliamentary inquiry that would require identity checks before people could set up online social media profiles.

Queensland Labor MPs Kim Richards and Don Brown, who have both been targeted by Laming on the Facebook pages, told Guardian Australia that Laming was a serial offender online.

“If Scott Morrison is talking about his efforts to clean up social media, then I hope he talks to Andrew Laming, because he is the worst offender in the Redlands area,” Brown said.

Richards, who has accused Laming of ongoing harassment, said Laming needed to reveal - and delete - the Facebook pages he was operating.

“He should fess up, and if the prime minister is saying that social media needs to be used for good not evil, then here is a good place to start.”

Laming declined to comment on the Facebook pages when contacted on Sunday.

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Andrew Laming: MP 'steps away from duties' amid harassment complaints

🕒 27 March



AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT

Andrew Laming apologised for his comments to two women

Australian MP Andrew Laming says he is stepping aside from duties to undertake cultural sensitivity training after allegations of harassing women online.

Two women accused him of slandering them, with one saying it had left her feeling suicidal.

PM Scott Morrison had ordered Mr Laming, a backbencher in his Liberal Party, to apologise in parliament for his "disgraceful" behaviour.

Mr Laming has not stepped down as an MP.

Any decision that sees him go will have consequences for the government, as it could cost Mr Morrison's coalition its parliamentary majority.

In his statement, Mr Laming said: "I will step down from all parliamentary roles effective immediately and complete both the counselling courses I committed to; as well as additional clinical counselling, and ask for privacy while that is completed." He said he would have "more to say on my future" after his awareness training.

The episode is the latest challenge to Mr Morrison's government, in a month when a series of rape, misconduct and sexism allegations have rocked Australian politics.

The prime minister has faced mounting pressure over his response to the allegations and broader cultural problems within politics.

Last week, **tens of thousands of people marched in protests against the mistreatment of women** in Canberra and wider society.

What is Laming accused of?

A Channel Nine TV report aired on Thursday heard from two women who said they'd been repeatedly harassed by Mr Laming - who is their local Brisbane MP - on Facebook.

Alix Russo said he had targeted her with verbal abuse, and falsely accused her of fraud.

The report included screenshots of Mr Laming's comments, many of which attacked Ms Russo and ridiculed her business situation.

- **Will rape allegations change Australia's 'toxic' politics?**
- **Why women are marching across Australia**

"Unfortunately for you, I make the rules and you follow them," the MP wrote in response to one of her comments.

Another woman, Sheena Hewlett, said she and her husband - a local councillor - were also harassed by the MP.

Mr Laming apologised on Thursday for his social media posts.

"I want to unreservedly apologise to both Ms Hewlett and Ms Russo and I express my regret and deep apologies for the hurt and distress that that communication may have caused," he said.

Mr Morrison said: "I called him into my office yesterday, and told him to apologise and deal with it - and he has."

The opposition Labor Party called Mr Laming's comments "shocking" and said he should resign.

Mr Laming on Saturday also faced an accusation from a Brisbane woman that he had taken a mobile phone photo of her while she was bending over at a landscape supply business in 2019.

The woman contacted Mr Laming via Facebook to complain, the Sydney Morning Herald reported. It said the MP had replied that he was not trying "to be rude" in taking the image.

What is the wider story?

Many Australians - particularly women - have long accused politicians and the political environment of being toxic towards women. They have called for sweeping cultural changes.

Focus on the issue was ignited in February, after a former political adviser said she had been raped in 2019 by a male colleague in a minister's office.

Brittany Higgins, 26, reported the allegation to her boss - Defence Minister Linda Reynolds - but said she had felt pressure not to report it to police.

Her story inspired other women to come forward, including four others with allegations against the same man.





Why Australian women are saying 'enough is enough'

Later, Attorney General Christian Porter identified himself as the subject of a separate 1988 rape allegation - which he strongly denies. Police closed an investigation because his accuser is no longer alive.

Both Mr Porter and Ms Reynolds are on sick leave, but retain Mr Morrison's support.

Earlier this week, **a government adviser was fired** after a video showed him performing a sex act on a female lawmaker's desk.

Network Ten reported that parliament's prayer room had also been used by politicians and staff for sex.

Mr Morrison has condemned the reports and vowed to "get this house in order", but he has faced persistent accusations of not listening to women's concerns.

Ms Higgins has accused him of using "gaslighting" language and doubting victims.

Earlier this week, she also demanded an investigation into claims that the prime minister's office had sought to undermine her reputation.

Mr Morrison told Channel Nine on Thursday: "I may not have always got it as much as people would like me to, but I assure you, I am doing everything I can to understand it as best I can."

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News Opinion Sport Culture Lifestyle**Andrew Laming****Andrew Laming blocked from recontesting next election after backflip on pledge to quit politics****Sarah Martin**

🐦 @msmarto

Mon 12 Apr 2021 20.46 AEST

The Liberal National party in Queensland has blocked Andrew Laming from recontesting his seat at the next federal election after he backflipped on his decision to quit parliament.

Laming faced the state executive on Monday night after he met with the party's applicant review committee earlier in the day. The ARC decided not to endorse him for preselection and the state executive accepted that recommendation.

The controversial Bowman MP may now be eligible for a \$105,000 resettlement allowance, which is paid to MPs who "retire involuntarily" from parliament, including through loss of party endorsement "for reasons other than misconduct".

The party has agreed to reopen nominations for the safe Liberal seat paving the way for a contest between barrister Maggie Forrest, LNP small business committee chair Fran Ward and former state candidate Henry Pike.

A statement from the LNP said the state executive had “accepted the ARC’s recommendation that Dr Laming not proceed as a candidate”.

Following a series of reports about Laming’s poor behaviour towards women, including an incident where he allegedly photographed a woman while she was bending over, the Queensland MP had announced last month that he would “own those mistakes” and quit parliament. Queensland police subsequently said there was no evidence to indicate an offence had been committed in relation to the photograph.

While on leave for empathy and clinical counselling, Laming changed his mind about retiring, and appeared on Monday before the party’s vetting committee to push ahead with his nomination.

Laming’s failed bid for preselection came after the prime minister, Scott Morrison, welcomed his initial decision not to contest the next election and other frontbenchers labelled his behaviour “abhorrent” and “unacceptable”.

The government has insisted Laming remains a “fit and proper” person to remain in the party and on the government benches where the Coalition holds a one-seat majority.

The Australian Electoral Commission has a live investigation into Laming for operating more than 30 Facebook pages that were set up under the guise of community and news groups but which did not include any disclosure of their political affiliation.

Appearing before a Senate committee on Monday, Facebook said that it did not disclose the identity of any person who ran pages, releasing information only about when and where the page was created.

“Certainly any person can administer a large number of pages if they wish to, but all of those pages have to comply with our policies,” Mia Garlick, Facebook’s director of policy for Australia and New Zealand, said.

“I don’t think we would necessarily look into whether a particular person’s profession is relevant to how they are administering a page.”

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young questioned why Facebook transparency measures had not “been able to capture the misuse of Facebook”.

“You know that Andrew Laming is a member of parliament, that he is a politician. You would know, Facebook has all of the data and is aware of how many other pages he has established, you have all of that information don’t you?” Hanson-Young said.

“Do you think that the public has a right to know?”

Garlick said that while Facebook had the information it was “not something that we look at”.

“In terms of transparency around page administrators, that hasn’t been something that people have typically been requesting from us or that there has been public debate about,” Garlick said.

“To date that transparency around page administration has been around the date it was created, any page name changes, and where it is being administered from, and in response to political issues it has been that strong focus on political advertising.”

The policy director said these areas had been of “most concern” but Facebook was prepared to consider further disclosures.

“If that is something the Australian parliament wants to make a recommendation on we are happy to work with government to make sure we are responding to what the community expectations are around further transparency measures.”

Garlick said Facebook was fully cooperating with the investigation underway by the Australian Electoral Commission. Laming was contacted for comment.

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17 APR, 2021

Trams, cars fuel full-on Hart attack

Weekend Gold Coast Bulletin, Gold Coast



Page 1 of 4

Trams, cars fuel full-on Hart attack

Burleigh MP Michael Hart on the light rail, fast rail, autonomous vehicles, coal, carbon dioxide, the Ice Age and what he really thinks of Anastacia Palaszczuk

IT is meant to be a quick coffee catch-up.
 A chance to have a chat with Burleigh MP Michael Hart, the LNP representative for what is surely the most contentious seat on the Gold Coast, if not the southeast ... or even the whole damn state.
 After all, development, public transportation, growth, the environment – all are hot-button issues causing some serious southern suburb discomfort.
 So maybe that's why this mini-meeting turns into an almost three-hour marathon.
 But that's the present nature of the seat of Burleigh, not to mention the state of current politics – it's hard to stop once you start.
 In fact, that's exactly the issue dividing the central suburb of Palm Beach ... how to stop light rail and the development it brings.
 And for many constituents, Mr Hart has become the hero of the hour.

He's taking their concerns not just to heart but to parliament, questioning whether we're really on the right track.
 "I use the light rail and I championed it from the start – but not down the Gold Coast Hwy south from Burleigh," he says.
 "We have a perfectly good rail corridor available down the MI, let's head west from Burleigh and use that. We don't need to have heavy rail to the airport, we just need light rail in the heavy rail tracks and a connecting station at Varsity.
 "It makes sense to take the tourists round the back from the airport to Burleigh, they're not coming here to stay in Tugun or Currumbin. There aren't even any accommodation

towers for them.
 "I just want some straight answers. If (Transport Minister) Mark Bailey can show me the maps and the studies and explain why and how light rail will work down the Gold Coast Hwy, I'll happily be convinced. But I just can't see it working from an engineering, financial or common sense perspective and I think he knows that – that's why he's not coming clean."
 Mr Hart insists his preference for the M1 route has nothing to do with the fact that the light rail would then pass by his place of business, saying the Gold Coast Hwy route would pass by his personal residence – thereby raising its value.
 While that argument makes sense, less understandable is Mr Hart's stance against higher-density developments in Palm Beach, given he lives in one himself. "I'm a hypocrite. I'm living in a building that's over-dense and doesn't have an appropriate setback and now



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Trams, cars' fuel full-on Hart attack

Weekend Gold Coast Bulletin, Gold Coast



Queensland Government

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I'm opposing others just like it.

"If I had realised all that at the time perhaps I wouldn't have bought it off the plan. But just because I've done that doesn't mean I have to keep letting it happen. I can admit I could have done better and I want better for our city."

As a retired aircraft engineer, Mr Hart says he has a responsibility to maintain a "helicopter view" when it comes to seeing the best path forward for the future development and growth of the city, and he has some interesting opinions.

While he continues to champion an alternative route for Stage 4 of the light rail, he also believes we may not need it at all.

"Public transportation will be obsolete in five to 10 years

anyway, people already prefer Ubers," he says.

"The problem with public transportation is that it takes you from one fixed place to

another, but people want to go from where they are to where they want to be – not just in the vicinity.

"Once fully autonomous vehicles are on the streets it will change the whole game, you won't need carparks, you won't need public transportation, your car will do it all.

"So we need to really take that helicopter view of the whole situation and think whether we really want to sink all this money into something that will soon be obsolete."

And it's not just light rail in his sights, but the prospect of fast rail too.

Queensland's Olympics bid team is pushing ahead with plans for fast rail connectivity between the Gold Coast, Brisbane, Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba, with trains travelling 160km/h to link the

cities and decentralise southeast Queensland.

But Mr Hart says it's pointless: "What's the point of fast rail? It's just linking the airports together ... so why not just fly? Don't take a train, take a plane. Why not? Get an A320, it fits as many people as a train, get rid of security checks and check-in times and it works just like a train – but far faster and better.

"You could use your Translink card just like on a train. The plane goes at a set time just like a train and if your not on it, you miss it and have to catch the next plane at the next set time ... just like a train.

"If we're going to spend all this money on fast trains that just take you from one airport to another, why not just use planes? The infrastructure is already there."

It's not the only example of Mr Hart's blue-sky thinking.

From renewable energy to climate change, he has an interesting perspective when it comes to the environment.

"It's incredible that banks won't lend money to the coal industry and are cutting their own throats and shareholders' throats because someone has got in their ear and said coal is bad for the environment.

"It's not bad for the environment. Carbon dioxide is

what makes that plant out there green," he says, pointing outside the window of his electorate office.

"Take the carbon dioxide out and it will die. You can't lie about science. When people say you need to stop carbonising the world then you take away the stuff the plants eat. Then the plants die and we go back to the ice age.

"That doesn't mean we don't invest in renewable energy. There is a big future there, but we can't go rushing to implement it across the board when the technology is not ready yet.

"Look at what happened in Texas. They relied on wind farms and renewables for energy and then froze when the power went out because renewables are unreliable."

Reports have since shown that the Texas blackouts were primarily caused by inadequately winterised natural gas equipment, rather than frozen wind turbines and solar panels as claimed by the state's governor Greg Abbott.

Mr Hart says he's not one to believe in fake news or conspiracies – and is eager to receive his COVID vaccination, which he says he will happily post proof of online.

However, he says he's not immune to some suspicion when it comes to the state government's handling of the pandemic crisis.

"Truly, I'm not a conspiracist but someone said wasn't it funny that our most recent Queensland COVID lockdown came on the same day that JobKeeper ended.

"They wondered whether

the Premier did that to send businesses to the wall to prove her point that the federal government should have extended JobKeeper ... I'd hate to think that's true."

And yet, when it comes to his personal relationship with Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, Mr Hart has nothing but praise.

"Obviously our political views are very different, but as a person she is a lovely lady.

"In fact, of the 50-odd Labor MPs, I'd say 45 are great people. We go at it in work, but outside of that there's a great deal of respect."

Yet the federal government's ongoing crises regarding women in the workplace has affected Mr Hart's own office.

He says the critical lens now applied on male politicians has made for a sometimes awkward office atmosphere.

"There are two young



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women in my office and I'm so mindful when I'm around them ... and I shouldn't have to be. "I shouldn't have to think about that. But you have to because what worries me at the moment is that anybody can make a statement about a male politician and you're guilty regardless. I agree there has to be change in our workplace and that women have suffered too much but right now it feels as though the pendulum has swung too far."

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It's easy to see what voters in the seat of Burleigh find appealing about Mr Hart – he's not afraid to say what he really thinks.

And that's not something he plans to change. Despite the flack he cops as a public figure, he says this job is about love, not money.

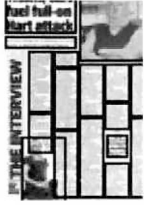
"Being a leader means listening to the voice of the people but sometimes making the difficult calls and then wearing the consequences. I'm prepared for that.

"That's what I've been doing and that's what I'll keep doing. This is a critical point for the seat of Burleigh, which is why I'll stand at the next election."

Indeed, time is finally up for this marathon meeting, but Michael Hart is far from finished.



I'm a hypocrite. I'm living in a building that's over-dense ...



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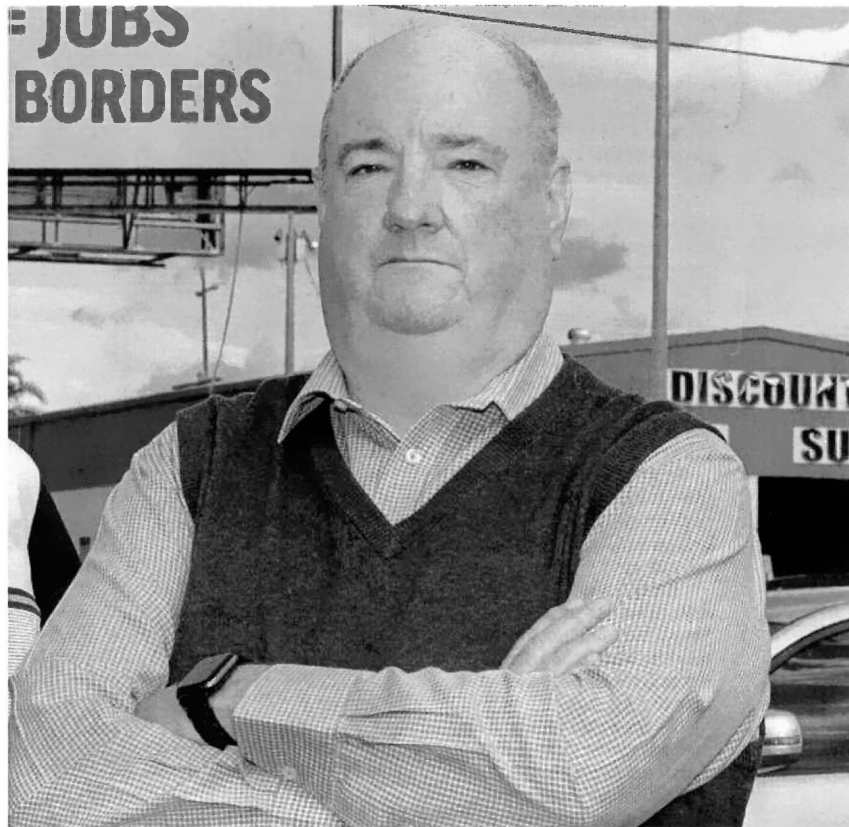
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Andrew Laming

Schools in Andrew Laming's electorate told his request for Naplan data was 'inappropriate'

Paul Karp

🐦 @Paul_Karp

Fri 9 Apr 2021 03.30 AEST

Andrew Laming wrote to schools in his electorate using his Liberal MP letterhead to request early Naplan data for private research for his doctoral thesis, prompting a complaint from the teachers' union.

The Queensland Teachers Union advised schools they were under "no obligation" to provide the test data, labelling the request "inappropriate".

Laming has agreed to undergo counselling and empathy training, and to quit at the next election in response to a string of claims of online abuse and harassment.

Although Laming has apologised for two specific incidents and generally for his communication style, Labor is set to continue pressure for him to

resign from the Liberal party and sit on the crossbench until the election.

This week, Guardian Australia revealed Laming operated more than 30 Facebook pages without disclosing his identity, prompting an Australian Electoral Commission investigation into the pages' lack of political authorisation, and that the MP awarded a \$550,000 grant to a rugby club with links to one of his staff members.

Laming, who already holds a bachelor of medicine, bachelor of surgery, and three masters degrees in philosophy (from the University of Sydney), public administration (Harvard) and politics and public policy (Charles Darwin University), is enrolled at the University of Melbourne seeking to become a doctor of education.

Guardian Australia understands Laming approached schools directly seeking Naplan data, circumventing guidelines which require an application to the education department for research data that is not already in the public domain.

The QTU president, Cresta Richardson, confirmed that Laming had sent “a request for school Naplan data to schools in his electorate on his formal letterhead”.

“Members notified us of this request seeking advice,” Richardson told Guardian Australia. “We advised them they were under no obligation to provide such data for Mr Laming.

“We formally notified the Department of Education of this request and that it was not appropriate for them to provide this data. [The department] notified schools of the same in the electorate.”

A spokesperson for the department told Guardian Australia it “does not discuss specific research applications” but confirmed the proper process is not to approach schools directly.

“Before researchers engage with schools they must first receive approval from the Department of Education through a formal research application process,” the spokesperson said.

“Engagement in the research is then at the discretion of the school principals.”

Guardian Australia understands that after Laming's invitation to participate in research was referred to the department, he later submitted a formal request and is now awaiting the outcomes report to be released by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Laming has a history of controversial comments about teachers. In January 2017, the MP prompted backlash after questioning on social media: “Are teachers back at work this week, or are they ‘lesson planning’ from home? Let me know exactly.”

Laming has called for teachers to work regular 38-hour weeks, cutting annual leave back to four weeks a year, and criticised education unions for securing “equal pay for the worst teacher and best”.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Laming encouraged parents to call the police on principals who refuse to let eligible children go to school.

Richardson said that teachers “trust had been worn down” by Laming’s record of “questioning their professionalism on social media”.

“It’s fair to say that many teachers didn’t feel supported by him in his capacity as the local MP.”

Laming is the chair of the House of Representatives standing committee on employment, education and training, which gave him an 11% pay rise for the role on top of his backbencher’s salary of more than \$200,000.

At the height of controversy in late March, Laming said he would step down from “all parliamentary roles effective immediately” - but the committee secretariat has confirmed to Guardian Australia he had yet to resign.

Police have decided they will not take action against Laming for allegedly taking an inappropriate photograph of a woman while she was bending over.

Crystal White had accused Laming of taking a photo of her while she was bent over, exposing her underwear beneath denim shorts, while she completed an office task at a Brisbane landscaping business in 2019.

Laming denied committing an offence and defended his decision to take the photo as a “humorous” depiction of a woman hard at work.

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Andrew Laming (second from right) with colleagues in the Coalition party room. Andrew Taylor/AAP

Andrew Laming: why empathy training is unlikely to work

March 29, 2021 3.50pm AEDT

As federal parliament continues to erupt with allegations of harassment and abuse, one of the responses from our most senior leaders has been empathy training.

These are programs that help people to see the world from other people's perspectives.

Over the weekend, Prime Minister Scott Morrison ordered disgraced Coalition MP Andrew Laming to do a private course on empathy. As Morrison told reporters

I would hope [...] that would see a very significant change in his behaviour.

This follows Laming's apology for harassing two women online and then confessing he didn't know what the apology was for. Soon after Morrison's announcement, Nationals leader Michael McCormack said he would get his party to do empathy training as well.

If we can [...] actually learn a few tips on how to not only be better ourselves, but how to call out others for it, then I think that's a good thing.

Author



Sue Williamson

Senior Lecturer, Human Resource Management, UNSW Canberra, UNSW

Many people — including opposition MPs, women’s advocates and psychologists — were immediately and instinctively sceptical. After all, if someone needs to take a course on how to be empathetic, surely something fundamental is missing, which no amount of training can fix?

The problem with empathy training

People are right to be dubious about empathy training — it has all the hallmarks of a human resources fad.

A parallel can be drawn with the introduction of unconscious bias training a few years ago. Neither are likely to be a silver bullet — or even a significant help — when it comes to discrimination and harassment.



Researchers have found requiring employees to undertake mandatory training, such as diversity training or sexual harassment training, can backfire. When people are “force fed”, they rebel and pre-existing beliefs are reinforced.

On top of this, training programs aimed to increase awareness about gender equality and discrimination are often seen by employers as remedial at best. At worst, they are punishment, which can also lead to a backlash from participants. The empathy training being given to Laming firmly sits in this camp — he has been found to have harassed women, so now he must be punished by attending a course.

Read more: Memo Liberal women: if you really want to confront misogyny in your party, you need to fix the policies

Similarly, one-off sexual harassment training has been found to be not only ineffective, but can make matters worse. American researchers found men forced to undertake sexual harassment training become defensive, and resistant to learning. But worse than this, male resistance can result in men blaming the victim, and thinking women are making false claims of sexual harassment.

So, the research findings are clear. One-off, mandatory diversity training and sexual harassment training do not work. While there is little data so far on the success of empathy programs, previous research gives no indication they would work either.

What does work?

It is not all bad news for empathy course conveners, however. Voluntary training is more successful, as volunteers are already primed for learning and concerned about gender equality and eliminating sexual harassment. Research also shows empathy can be taught, but the subject has to be willing to change.

But if mandatory training has limited effectiveness, what will work to eliminate sexual harassment? We certainly don't need any more indications our federal parliament and our broader society needs to change.



Earlier this month, tens of thousands of Australians took to the streets, calling for change at parliament house and beyond. James Ross/AAP

As Dr Meraiah Foley and I have previously argued, for training to be effective, it needs to do several things.

Firstly, it needs to be complemented by affirmative action measures, such as setting targets to increase the numbers of women in leadership. This is why the renewed debate about quotas in the Liberal Party is so important.

Secondly, the training needs to lead to new structures and new accountability for behaviour. This can be achieved by course participants identifying desirable behaviours that can progress equality at work.

For example, small actions such as ensuring women participate equally in meetings sends a signal their opinions are valued.

Participants then log when they enacted those behaviours, and discuss progress with trained facilitators. Participants continue to reflect, and act, and later, share experiences and identify successful strategies.

Read more: Bad times call for bold measures: 3 ways to fix the appalling treatment of women in our national parliament

Thirdly, for workplace gender equality to progress, the ongoing process of behaviour change needs to be complemented with systemic organisational change. As I have written elsewhere, researchers recommend organisations adopt short and long-term agendas, to achieve small, immediate wins, while deeper transformations occur.

Structural change starts with an examination of human resource processes and policies to uncover gender bias and discrimination. No doubt Kate Jenkins will be undertaking such a task in her review of workplace culture at parliament house.

The bigger change we need

Examining process and policies, however, is not enough. Changing the language, and other symbolic expressions in organisations are also an important part of culture change to embed gender equality. For example, making sure meeting rooms are named after women and portraits of women — as well as men — adorn the walls sends a subtle yet powerful message the space also belongs to women.

Changing the ways of working, the rituals and artefacts of parliament house will help to change the culture.

Structural and systemic change to achieve gender equality is slow. While sending recalcitrant politicians to training courses may seem like an unavoidable first step, it is not where we need to focus attention.



Sexual harassment **Gender equality** **Unconscious bias** **Diversity training** **Parliament House** **Morrison government**
Andrew Laming