



Queensland Labor MP Jim Madden won't be expelled over bullying claim

By SARAH ELKS



4:32pm February 20, 2023

Alleged workplace bully and Queensland Labor MP Jim Madden will not be expelled from the party but will receive one-on-one anti-harassment and bullying training.

A former electorate office staffer of Ipswich West MP and backbencher Mr Madden made a formal complaint to the Queensland ALP in March last year, sparking an unprecedented investigation into the politician's behaviour.

ALP complaints manager Rachel Drew, a partner at Holding Redlich, engaged top Brisbane barrister Kylie Hillard to conduct the investigation, and the report was handed to ALP state secretary Kate Flanders this month.

It is understood the report found Mr Madden broke party rules and recommended he be disciplined – including receiving anti-bullying training – but he will not be expelled.

Ms Flanders declined to comment on the specific case, but said “all complaints are taken seriously and investigated and the party will comply with the recommendations following those investigations”.

“I take these things very seriously,” she said.

Mr Madden has been contacted for comment.

His former staffer made the complaint to the ALP after her WorkCover claim for bullying and harassment was approved.

It comes as three Queensland crossbench MPs unite to call for the state parliament to stop hiding information about financial settlements paid to electorate office staff who accuse MPs of bullying.

The Australian revealed staffers – employed by the Queensland Parliamentary Service in the MPs' electorate offices – were receiving severance payouts after signing a confidential “deed of release” and agreeing not to disparage the parliament or its clerk.

Greens MP Michael Berkman said “publicly funded ‘hush money’ is not acceptable and is not in the public interest”.

“Where staff have suffered bullying they should be compensated by the parliament, as their employer, but payouts to protect the ‘reputation’ of politicians are just plain dodgy,” Mr Berkman said.

Independent MP for Noosa Sandy Bolton said nondisclosure agreements should not be used.

“Transparency and public accountability should be a broadly applied principle to both the public and private sector in relation to bullying, sexual harassment or assault claims,” Ms Bolton said.

Katter's Australian Party leader Robbie Katter agreed there should be much more transparency and “repeat offender” bully MPs should be hauled before the parliament's ethics committee.

“If an MP's a repeat offender, perhaps the ethics committee is the right place to have a look at it,” Mr Katter said.

“It wouldn't hurt to have a tap on the shoulder if you've had three of these (complaints). Usually, you'd err on the side of public scrutiny, and if there's no problem (with your behaviour) you shouldn't be worried about public scrutiny.”

Queensland parliament's long-time clerk Neil Laurie refused a data request to reveal how much had been paid out in taxpayer-funded financial settlements in the past five years, and to how many electorate office staffers.

Mr Laurie said: "As a matter of policy, the Parliamentary Service does not comment on HR matters."

Parliament is also exempt from the state's Right to Information laws, and the spending is not disclosed in its annual report or financial statements.

In the past, two of Mr Madden's former electorate office staffers have received the deeds of release and financial settlements from the parliament.

A parliamentary insider said there had been "dozens" of severance payments doled out by the parliament, and it had been "going on forever, on both sides of politics".

MORE ON THIS STORY



No Labor retreat ban on 'bully' MP

By SARAH ELKS, LYDIA LYNCH



Labor MP target of bullying inquiry

By SARAH ELKS, MICHAEL MCKENNA



Staffers of bully MPs given cash for silence

By SARAH ELKS, LYDIA LYNCH



SARAH ELKS SENIOR REPORTER