

Inquiry finds Husar behaved badly to staff but dismisses allegations of lewd conduct

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

The inquiry into Labor MP Emma Husar's conduct has upheld complaints that she behaved unreasonably towards her staff, but rejected claims of lewd conduct and misleading the parliament.

These are the central findings of the independent assessment by barrister John Whelan, commissioned by the NSW Labor party. The party said the legal advice, based on this assessment, was that there was "no basis" for Husar to resign from parliament.

Husar, who is in her first term, [announced this week](#) she would quit at the election.

NSW Labor issued a summary of the Whelan inquiry's findings on Friday.

Read more: [**Grattan on Friday: Turnbull is trying to turn Emma Husar story into a Bill Shorten narrative**](#)

The assessment said the allegation of misuse of public entitlements should be referred to the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority for audit, and noted Husar had advised she was referring herself.

It found allegations of sexual harassment, on the balance of probabilities and Briginshaw Standard, were not supported. Nor were claims that she behaved in a lewd manner in the office of Labor frontbencher Jason Clare.

But complaints that staff performed non-work related and personal duties for Husar had merit - "even accounting for the particular nature of political offices". They should be referred to the Department of Finance's Ministerial and Parliamentary Services for advice about the

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appropriate employment guidelines issued to MPs, the assessment said.

It also found merit in complaints that “staff were subjected to unreasonable management, including unreasonable communication, demands, practices and disciplinary methods”.

The assessment outlined the two contrasting perceptions of what had happened that it had been given.

Husar argued “she manages appropriately to achieve higher standards of performance and loyalty. And does so under a heavy workload, intense personal stress and a desire to serve Western Sydney and in particular the cause of victims of domestic violence.”

But the men and women who made complaints “perceive and allege they have found much of the member’s management offensive and unreasonable”.

“After considering all sides of the relevant issues the assessment has generally favoured the complainant’s perception of events.”

The inquiry recommended Ministerial and Parliamentary Services review the accessibility of the current electorate office staff complaints resolution process.

It also said Husar, who is on extended leave, and Finance’s Ministerial and Parliamentary Services should be asked to develop a “return to work” plan, covering timing, training, staff needs and office support.

The assessment condemned as “reprehensible” the release publicly of selected allegations.

It said there were concerns for the wellbeing of many involved and counselling was being made

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available.

The full assessment – which emphasised the need for a “de-escalation” - will not be released.

Husar said the report had cleared her “of the most malicious and damaging of allegations, which were not only baseless but leaked to media.”

“I don’t believe any of these should have cost me my reputation, my job, or humiliated me and my children,” she said.

“This has been trial by media, gossip and innuendo.

“I am gutted that the willingness of certain individuals, and certain parts of the media, to defame me on vexatious and unfounded accusations, has caused so much personal, emotional and professional damage to me, so much hurt to those close to me, and political harm to the party I love, have supported and worked so hard for.”

She said she was confident that if she had been given the opportunity to respond to all allegations in full, without the public attacks, she would have been able to put the matter behind her and continue to serve her electorate of Lindsay.

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

Authors: Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

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