

**Sexual Misconduct Allegations Statement**

ALLEGATIONS have been made to CountryMinded describing sexual misconduct by a candidate in the current New England by-election.

At this time these allegations are no more than hearsay and CountryMinded will not be drawn further on any details of these allegations.

CountryMinded is extremely conscious of the distinction between public interest and the need to assure privacy for the personal matters of individuals and their families. However, if there is evidence of unlawful conduct then the priority must be to investigate and prosecute.

There is no place in our society for any kind of domestic, sexual, physical or emotional abuse and there can no place in our society for these crimes to be tolerated or ignored.

People in our community must be encouraged to speak up when they see or experience any coercive or abusive behaviour of this nature regardless of who is perpetrating it. The only way to stamp out this antisocial behaviour is to shine a light brightly on it and bring it squarely into the public eye.

If a formal complaint alleges breaches of the law, CountryMinded would expect all matters to be fully investigated by police. If any institution, or its agents, is complicit in trying to hide any misdoings and thereby misinform the community and/or obstruct justice then these matters should be fully investigated also.

In our society all people should expect to be able to go about their lives unmolested. It is essential that the community rallies to support any person who has been subject to any kind of abuse or mistreatment.

The solution to these problems is cultural and the change that is needed must be embodied in the highest order in the culture and behaviour of all those who are and aspire to be community leaders.

CountryMinded is acutely aware of the political risk in commenting on this issue. However, it is our responsibility to stand up for our community and those who are mistreated in it, always and in all things, not just when it is comfortable or easy. It would be disgraceful for any political party to deliberately ignore allegations, or obstruct or discourage allegations from being formalised.

If you, or someone you know, has been assaulted or molested in any way, it is essential to speak up and report it. For assistance, contact police directly or the NSW **Victims Access Line** on **1800 633 063**.

-Ends-

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