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Culture of sexism in the media must be tackled, says journalists' union

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, the union for Australia's journalists, welcomes the on-air apology by broadcasting personality Eddie McGuire over comments he made about a prominent female sports journalist, and calls on all media organisations to redouble efforts to educate about and stamp out sexism and misogyny in their workplaces.

MEAA director of Media, Katelin McNerney, said when one of Australia's most decorated journalists could be the subject of jokes about drowning her in an ice bucket, it highlighted a culture where women in the media still struggled to be treated with respect at work.

"These comments should never have been made, even as a joke," McNerney said.

"These kinds of remarks are not only hurtful, but they reinforce the need for concerted efforts to improve respect and treatment of women in the media."

A recent survey commissioned by the MEAA's Women In Media initiative over more than 1000 media workers found an overwhelming sense that the media was still a "blokes world", where casual sexism and discrimination was rife.

The 'Mates Over Merit' report found 48% of women said they had experienced intimidation, abuse or sexual harassment in their workplace, and 41% said they'd been harassed, bullied or trolled on social media.

It also found that while most media companies have policies to deal with sex discrimination, only 11% of survey respondents rated them "very effective", and only one in three women felt confident to speak up about discrimination.

"We are pleased that Eddie McGuire and his fellow commentators have now manned up to apologise for their comments about one of the nation's most respected and awarded journalists, Caroline Wilson," Ms McNerney said.

"But it is a pity that these comments were made in the first place – even if it was in jest – and that it took a blaze of adverse publicity before apologies were forthcoming.

"What makes the comments even worse is they also made light of violence against women.

"What kind of message does this send to young women wanting to make a career in journalism or broadcasting, particularly sports journalism?

"It demonstrates once again that there is still a culture of casual sexism in newsrooms and broadcast studios around Australia."

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