



## PRESS RELEASE (No. 4 of 2022)

### **Response to Minister's Comments**

#### **Statement by Christopher Pryde, Director of Public Prosecutions**

It is reassuring that the Minister has no plans to interfere with the judicial process in sentencing but the Minister was not misquoted and her own statement published in the Fiji Sun on Saturday (11.6.22) refers to “lobbying for harsher penalties”. The Minister claims she was “lobbying” as a woman but she was not invited to make a speech as a woman but as the Minister for Women, a critical distinction. Words matter, especially from a Minister. These words were inappropriate.

If she had been misquoted by the Fiji Times, the correct procedure would have been to make a complaint and request a correction. This she has not done so we are entitled to rely on the article as an accurate report of what she said at the consultation. In any event, she has not denied that she was lobbying and the Fiji Times have confirmed the content was lifted directly from her speech at the consultation.

Boundaries need to be respected and the judiciary needs to be allowed to function without interference however well-intentioned the motive.

On the issue of speaking to child witnesses, my original comment stands. The Minister should not be meeting and talking to state witnesses when a police

investigation is ongoing. This has the potential to taint the evidence and potentially jeopardise any future prosecution. There are well-established procedures for dealing with child witnesses by trained professionals to ensure there is no retraumatising of the victim and the integrity of the evidence is protected.

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13 June 2022

*The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is an independent office established under section 117 of the 2013 Fijian Constitution. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is motivated by the principle that it is in the interests of justice that the guilty be brought to justice and the innocent are not wrongly convicted.*