



Fourth woman makes complaint about former staffer who allegedly raped Brittany Higgins

Four Corners / By Louise Milligan

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Scott Morrison has apologised for the way Brittany Higgins's allegations were handled.

(ABC News, Supplied)

A fourth woman has made an allegation about the man at the centre of what is currently Australia's biggest political scandal — the alleged rape of former staffer Brittany Higgins inside Parliament House.

The woman, who made a formal report at a police station in Canberra on Sunday, has come forward after [Ms Higgins alleged last week](#) that she was raped in the office of the then-defence industry minister Linda Reynolds after drinks with the man in March 2019.

Two other women — a [Liberal staffer](#) and a [former Coalition volunteer](#) — also made allegations to The Australian newspaper that they were sexually assaulted by the same former staffer.

Key points:

- The latest woman to come forward alleges the man stroked her thigh under the table at a Canberra bar in 2017
- She is the fourth woman to come forward with allegations against the man

The fourth woman, who for now wishes to remain anonymous, told the ABC that when she learned the identity of Ms Higgins's alleged rapist through staffer networks, she winced — she remembered him as being "really sleazy".

Socialising after work in 2017 with colleagues at Canberra's Public Bar, the favoured drinking hole of the political class, the woman said she was startled when the man who would later be identified as the staffer who allegedly raped Ms Higgins reached his hand under the table and stroked her thigh.

The woman said this was completely uninvited and the incident made her angry.

She said it wasn't the first time she received unwanted attention or advances from men she worked with at Parliament, and it wasn't the last.

"By that time, I was just so used to sexual harassment I just brushed it off," she said.

She made her statement late on Sunday afternoon at a local police station, and says within the hour she had been telephoned by a detective from the Australian Federal Police's Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Team.

She says the officer asked her to come in and make a formal statement later in the week.

The woman said she was coming forward to support Brittany Higgins because, now that Ms Higgins has called in police, she knows what a hard road lies ahead in the criminal justice system.

Ms Higgins has said she felt pressure not to proceed with a formal complaint for fear of losing her job.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison apologised for the way the matter was handled and said he had asked his staff what they knew about the incident.

These latest allegations follow a [Four Corners report in November](#) about the culture of Parliament House, including unrelated allegations against two government ministers.

- Two other women made allegations to The Australian newspaper after Brittany Higgins went public with her rape allegation last week

Sexual assault support services:

- [1800 Respect national helpline](#): 1800 737 732
- [Lifeline \(24 hour crisis line\)](#): 131 114
- [Beyond Blue](#): 1300 224 636

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