

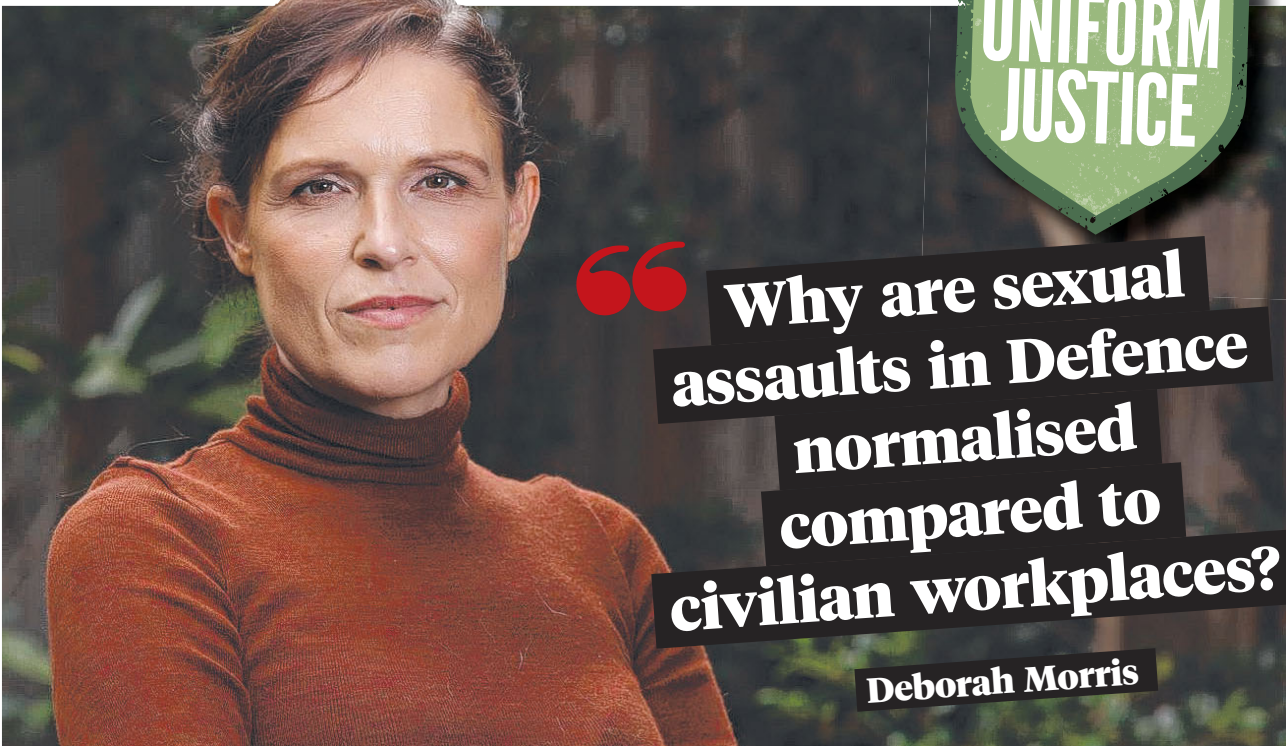
NEW GOVERNMENT, SAME OLD SILENCE ON SEX ASSAULTS

Defence victims 'betrayed'

EXCLUSIVE  
CYDONEE MARDON

SEX assault victims again feel betrayed – this time by the new Albanese government which has so far ignored their pleas for change, claiming if these attacks had happened to anyone working at Parliament House there would be outrage. Senator Jacqui Lambie has weighed in, calling on Labor to have a “collective spine” and clean out the rot in the Australian Defence Force. Ten former ADF members have gone public with their story, hoping politicians will put an end to Defence investigating itself in sexual assault and abuse cases. The Labor government brought hope to many victims

who believed then Defence personnel shadow spokesman Shayne Neumann would finally be in a position as Minister to bring about change. However Mr Neumann was moved from the portfolio and so far Defence Minister Richard Marles and Defence Personnel and Veterans’ Affairs Minister Matt Keogh have failed to respond to requests for input into The Sunday Telegraph’s Uniform Justice campaign. Deborah Morris, a military researcher, advocate, and victim and survivor of military sexual trauma who spoke earlier this year about being raped by a superior and the appalling way Defence handled her complaints, said the silence was deafening. “Whilst public commen-



Advocate and survivor Deborah Morris Picture: Tara Croser.

tators have argued that the election was decided on women’s issues and the implementation of an independent integrity commission, the silence from consecutive governments on committing to meaningful change for military sexual assault victims and survivors, as well as the establishment of a truly independent military justice system is disheartening,” she said. “Defence arguably has dis-

proportionately higher rates of sexual assaults and harassment against women than any other employer in Australia and the numbers continue to rise. “This is unacceptable given that Defence is a government department. “Victims of military sexual trauma often lose their careers, health, relationships, and future opportunities while alleged perpetrators are too often not investigated and then promoted. “Why are sexual assaults in Defence normalised compared to civilian workplaces?” Senator Lambie said: “If this happened in Parliament House they’d be screaming blue murder. But it’s happening to hundreds of women who have served Australia in uniform and all we get is resounding silence from governments on both sides.” PM Anthony Albanese refused to commit to change when asked at a press conference about The Sunday Telegraph’s campaign, instead pointing to the Royal Commission on veteran suicides which, he said, he had campaigned for in opposition. “Everyone deserves to feel safe in their workplace, women and men, and nowhere more than in our defence forces,” he said.



“Why are sexual assaults in Defence normalised compared to civilian workplaces?”

Deborah Morris

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