



**SENATOR THE HON AMANDA STOKER**  
**Assistant Minister to the Attorney-General**  
**Assistant Minister for Industrial Relations**  
**Assistant Minister for Women**  
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**TRANSCRIPT – ABC Queensland Drive with Annie Gaffney**

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Subjects: Legal action over MH17, PM&C's Women's Network logo

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**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** Senator Amanda Stoker is the Assistant Minister to the Attorney-General and the Assistant Minister for Women. Senator, great to have you with us on the program this afternoon. It's now eight years since MH17 was shot down, and four years since the Australian and the Netherlands confirmed they believed Russia was responsible for the attack. Why is it only now we're starting legal action?

**AMANDA STOKER:** Thanks, Annie. The reason we're starting legal action now is because it is the next step in the process that we have consistently been walking since the time that the plane was downed. And it means that we have exhausted all of the earlier options and have to escalate to this step. So in the time that has passed, we have engaged in a multi-nation investigation that's been about getting to the bottom of accountability and making sure that there is a body of evidence that is strong to prove the Russian Federation's responsibility. We've taken that to negotiations that have been on a tripartite basis, so between the Netherlands, Australia, and the Russian Federation. Russia has walked away from those negotiations. And so, we have prepped up, in a sense, in a more legal sense, the case to be presented. And by bringing it to the International Civil Aviation Organisation, which is the part of the United Nations that involves all the different nations involved in civil aviation working together to have common rules about the way the commerce of air travel occurs. By bringing this case, we you can attempt to enforce some accountability on to Russia for its refusal to, in a sense, obey the rules-based order for international civil aviation. And the consequence, we hope, will be, not only that there is a ruling that forces the Russian Federation to be held accountable for what it has done, but also, we hope that there will be a constructive decision on their part to take steps to make sure this doesn't happen again, and actions to compensate the families of the 298 people, including 38 Australians, who lost their lives. That's what's occurred in previous cases where the International Civil Aviation Organisation has been brought in, and those who refuse to obey its rulings find themselves excluded from this part of commerce. So, I guess that's the stick that lies at the end of this.

**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** But Russia has denied all along having anything to do with shooting down MH17, and it's now effectively a pariah state after the Ukraine invasion. Is there any chance of that happening?

**AMANDA STOKER:** Look, I'm the first person to admit that international law has its limitations, and that, ultimately, in these sorts of things, particularly when you're dealing with a nation like Russia, they rely heavily on their sovereignty rather than on their international networks. But I think it's also true to say that, you know, a bit like when they couldn't get Al Capone for racketeering, they went him for tax fraud. This is a way that we can attempt to use the levers that are available to us to hold the Russian Federation accountable for what they have done wrong. And we can prove that they have done wrong. The investigation made it very clear that flight MH17 was shot down by a Russian Buk surface-to-air missile. It proves that that missile system was transported from Russia to an agricultural field in the east of Ukraine on the morning of the 17th of July 2014 when it was under control of Russian-backed separatists. And we can prove that missile system belonged to the Russian Federation's 53rd anti-aircraft military brigade and was accompanied by a trained Russian military crew. That means that when it was fired, it was either fired by that trained Russian military crew or someone under their instruction, directional control. There's no wiggling away from the facts here. And a bit like when a person doesn't accept responsibility for a crime in Australia, we prove it up in court, and then the consequences flow. We're doing much the same here. By proving it up on an international stage, we can make those consequences of excluding them from the regime for civil aviation be imposed as a consequence.

**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** What outcome is the Australian government hoping for?

**AMANDA STOKER:** Look, the best outcome would be for the Russian Federation to see the strength of the case against them, come back to negotiations and constructively work to compensate and acknowledge the loss they have caused. Now, we're not naive about this, particularly given the negotiation process we've already undergone. So we are prepared- while we will hope for those things, we are prepared to do what's necessary to get an enforceable ruling, which has an effect much like sanctions that apply in the civil aviation space.

**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** This is ABC Radio Queensland and Senator Amanda Stoker is my guest at 5:15. Annie Gaffney's my name. The department, on another matter of Prime Minister and Cabinet, has had to drop its new women's network logo, Senator, because it looked an awful lot like male genitals. As the Assistant Minister for Women, when did you first see the new logo?

**AMANDA STOKER:** Look, I didn't see the logo until, you know, some of the more puerile senators were, you know, posting what they would call funnies based on the logo. But, I mean, it's a letter W on an oblong background. Apparently the letter W's been in use as the internal Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet women's network symbol for a long time. I think - I didn't notice it until it was pointed out, but now that everybody has had a bit of a giggle at that observation, it's been shelved, and I'm sure the internal group that put together the logo will go back to the drawing board.

**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** How can something like this happen, given all the people that would have had to have looked at that design and review it and approve it? Surely someone must have noticed, Senator.

**AMANDA STOKER:** Well, it was really only an internal departmental process, although there was wide consultation from within the department, so clearly none of the internal people who were consulted had the same concern. But look, as a government, we didn't see it. It didn't sort of go beyond the departmental level. And once it's pointed out, it's been adjusted. I think it's - the whole

thing's a little bit immature, to be honest, but we can take it on board and adjust it. I think it's - yeah, it's a little bit silly, given the big things of the day we've got to talk about.

But can I comment, Annie, on something from the segment just before. You were talking about casual workers, and you mentioned that a fella named Bill from Bundaberg pointed out that casuals have a right to seek conversion to permanent employment after a period of 12 months?

**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** Yeah

**AMANDA STOKER:** Bill is spot-on. So anybody who's been a long term casual and doesn't want to be one, exercise your right to convert to become a permanent employee if that's what works best for you. But no, you only get the loading if you're a casual.

**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** And Senator, before I let you go, I know you've diverted nicely away from the women's network logo...

**AMANDA STOKER:** [Laughs]

**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** ... But any idea of how much that was - that cost, that logo, and when will we see the new one?

**AMANDA STOKER:** You know, I had asked how much did it cost? And apparently there was no external design services used. It was really just sort of whipped up internally by the ordinary staff graphic designer. So I don't think an awful lot of resources were put into it. And it was something dealt with completely internally. But they're going to go back to the drawing board, get a new one, and I suspect it won't take long.

**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** And was it the same team, or any of the members of that team involved in creating the milkshake consent videos from last year? By any means?

**AMANDA STOKER:** I expect not, but I don't actually know, so I can find out for you.

**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** Senator Amanda Stoker, you're a trooper. Thanks so much for being a part of the program. Appreciate your time.

**AMANDA STOKER:** Good on you, Annie.

**ANNIE GAFFNEY:** Amanda Stoker on ABC Radio Queensland.

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**Authorised by Senator The Hon Amanda Stoker, Liberal National Party, Queensland**