

Response from an ABC spokesperson:

Should the ABC have published the existence of the letter?

The letter included a credible allegation of a serious historical crime made against a senior Cabinet minister and called for action to be taken by the Prime Minister.

It was also sent to other senior federal politicians who felt it sufficiently serious to be referred to the Federal Police.

There was a clear public interest in reporting and scrutinising the government's response to the allegations.

That is the legitimate role of the media.

Why didn't the ABC/ Four Corners seek comment from the Minister or allow him to deny the accusations (before Friday publication)?

The story on Friday 26 February reported that the AFP had been notified of a letter sent to Prime Minister Scott Morrison and other politicians detailing an alleged historical rape by a Cabinet Minister in the federal government.

The ABC sought and received comment from the people to whom the letter was sent: the offices of the Prime Minister and Senators Sarah Hanson-Young and Penny Wong. Their statements were included in the story.

The story did not name any individual or link the allegations in the letter to any individual.

It is standard practice to seek a response from an individual who is named in a story. When the individual in question is not named, for legal reasons, it is not usual practice to seek a response.

Were there legal reasons for not approaching the Minister?

Legal advice on the story was provided to *Four Corners* and considered by the editorial team in the usual manner. That advice is protected by legal professional privilege.

Did the ABC/ Four Corners approach the PMO for comment prior to publishing?

Answered above.

How does the ABC defend the charge of trial by media?

The expression "trial by media" implies that the media, or a part of the media, raises allegations and itself concludes a person is guilty of whatever is alleged. That is not what the ABC has done at any stage.

The historic rape allegation against Christian Porter was raised and forwarded to the Prime Minister by third parties, not the media. At no time has the ABC reported, concluded or implied that Mr Porter is guilty of the alleged crime.

The ABC believes reporting that a serious allegation of a crime has been made against a Commonwealth Attorney-General is in the public interest, not least so public scrutiny can be given to the government's handling of the allegations.

In the case of the "Inside the Canberra Bubble" program, Four Corners was researching a different topic, on the "pink recession", when women within Parliament urged the program to look more closely at what they described as a toxic workplace culture.

Three serving Senators, a former Liberal Prime Minister, a prominent barrister and a former Liberal staffer were prepared to be interviewed on camera. The matters raised were serious and clearly in the public interest. It's noteworthy that the Government has now established an inquiry led by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner into the workplace culture of Parliament.