

# Malcolm Turnbull bans ministers from sex with staffers, but resists calls to ask Barnaby Joyce to resign

By political correspondent [Louise Yaxley](#)

Updated February 15, 2018 18:14:57



**VIDEO:** ['A shocking error of judgement'](#) (ABC News)

Ministers will be banned from having sexual relationships with staffers under a rethink of the code of conduct announced by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull today.

The announcement comes amid [intensifying pressure on Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce](#) over an affair with his former media adviser Vikki Campion.

Mr Turnbull resisted calls for him to ask his deputy to resign, but described Mr Joyce's behaviour as, "a shocking error of judgement" that "set off a world of woe".

He spoke of the "terrible hurt and humiliation that Barnaby, by his conduct, has visited on his wife Natalie and their daughters — and indeed his new partner".

"Barnaby made a shocking error of judgement in having an affair with a young woman working in his office.

“In doing so he has set off a world of woe for those women, and appalled all of us.

"Our hearts go out to them."

Mr [Joyce is taking leave next week](#), saying he wants to support his family and partner after such intense public focus on personal matters.

"I think he needs that time, he needs that time to reflect, he needs that time to seek forgiveness and understanding from his wife and girls," Mr Turnbull said.

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"He needs to make a new home for his partner and their baby that is coming in April."



VIDEO: Malcolm Turnbull announced in Question Time his deputy would be on leave next week. (ABC News)

## 'No good comes of it' says Turnbull of sex with staff

The Prime Minister said he had rewritten the code of ministerial standards effective from today, because the current standards were "truly deficient".

Mr Turnbull said he did not care if ministers were married or single, they must not have sexual relations with staff.

He added that he did not want to moralise but told his ministers they needed to recognise that behaviour where a blind eye would have been turned in the past would no longer be acceptable.

"Today, in 2018, it is not acceptable for a minister to have a sexual relationship with somebody who works for them, it is a very bad workplace practice and everybody knows that no good comes of it," he said.

"This is the standard that I will hold — from this day forth — all my ministers to."

Mr Turnbull said politicians had to accept giving up some privacy.

"We have to recognise that here in this place we have such important responsibilities and we don't, in practical terms, have the privacy that many others do, we have to acknowledge that we must have a higher standard," he said.

He said the culture in Parliament must change and that the code needed to reflect the values of respectful workplaces.

## PM distances himself from question of Joyce's resignation

Mr Turnbull made it clear how angry he was with Mr Joyce about the affair.

When asked why he did not urge Mr Joyce to resign, the Prime Minister said it was up to the Deputy Prime Minister to consider his own position.

"These are matters for Barnaby Joyce to reflect on," he said.

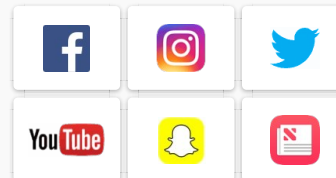
Federal Labor frontbencher Anthony Albanese said it was clear the Prime Minister no longer had confidence in Mr Joyce.

"What we saw from the Prime Minister today was a Prime Minister who doesn't have confidence in his own deputy and doesn't seem to have the wit to work out how to do anything about it," Mr Albanese said.

“This is a Government where it has a deputy who can't do his job.”

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### Joyce lost his moral authority



The scandal surrounding Barnaby Joyce's personal life has shattered his mystique and any authority, writes Andrew Probyn.

The Prime Minister said Mr Joyce had given him an unequivocal assurance he had not breached the current ministerial standards.

Mr Turnbull said it was now up to Mr Joyce's critics to produce evidence of any such breach.

But questions remain about Mr Joyce [accepting the use of an apartment rent-free for six months](#).



**VIDEO:** [Barnaby Joyce told Parliament he was approached by a friend with the accommodation offer.](#) (ABC News)

Mr Turnbull said it would have been a breach of existing standards if Mr Joyce had asked for the free use of the apartment.

"From what Barnaby has said he did not do that," he said.

But a journalist who has covered the issue said businessman Greg Maguire, who donated the apartment, said Mr Joyce had asked him for the accommodation.

Mr Turnbull also noted that Mr Joyce was not a member of parliament when he spoke to Mr Maguire because he had been found ineligible by the High Court.

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First posted February 15, 2018 17:01:47

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