



SENATOR THE HON SARAH HENDERSON

Liberal Senator for Victoria

The Hon Shane Stone AC QC
Chairman of the Council for the Order of Australia
The Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat
Government House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Stone *Shane*

Ms Bettina Arndt's award as a Member of the Order of Australia in the General Division

I write to raise my concerns about Ms Bettina Arndt who was awarded an Order of Australia in the General Division (AM) on 16 January 2020. Ms Arndt was recognised for her significant service to the community as a social commentator and to gender equity through advocacy for men.

Section 4(4) of the Terminations and Cancellations Ordinance of the Constitution of the Order of Australia provides that:

The Governor-General may terminate an appointment, or cancel an award, if, in the opinion of the Governor-General, the holder of the appointment or award has behaved or acted in a manner that has brought disrepute on the Order.

On 21 February 2020, Ms Arndt published the following comments on Twitter in response to the horrific murder of Ms Hannah Clarke and her three children in Camp Hill, Brisbane.

"Congratulations to the Queensland police for keeping an open mind and awaiting proper evidence, including the possibility that Rowan Baxter might have been 'driven too far.' But note the misplaced outrage. How dare police deviate from the feminist script of seeking excuses... and explanations when women stab their partners to death, or drive their children into dams but immediately judging a man in these circumstances as simply representing the evil violence that is in all men."

I believe that Ms Arndt's comments constitute conduct which has brought disrepute on the Order.

These comments which concern a man who doused his wife and children in petrol and burnt them to death are abhorrent. Suggesting that someone may have been "driven too far" - which implies that there may have been some justification for such a heinous crime - reflects values which are inconsistent with Ms Arndt retaining her award as a Member of the Order of Australia in the General Division.

It is important to point out that I have previously been quite supportive of Ms Arndt including when I was chairing a House of Representatives parliamentary inquiry into family violence law reform. I recognise that Ms Arndt, as a social commentator, has in the past made an important contribution to the debate on family violence and gender equity including in her advocacy for Australian men who suffer family violence. I say this noting that it is estimated that some 90 per cent of family violence victims are women and children.

Notwithstanding her contribution, I believe that Ms Arndt has so seriously crossed the line in her commentary concerning this horrific act of family violence that it is no longer appropriate that she be awarded this Honour recognising her work as a social commentator.

I understand that the Office of the Governor-General has referred the matter to the Council for the Order of Australia for advice. I submit that the Council should advise the Governor-General that Ms Arndt's award as a Member of the Order of Australia in the General Division be cancelled.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Henderson

24 / 2 / 2020

cc: Mr Paul Singer MVO, Secretary, Order of Australia, Government House, Canberra.