

Equity Generation Lawyers

Statement on the abuse of Ms Sharma, our client

Last weekend, our client Anjali Sharma revealed publicly the abuse she has received over the course of proceedings brought against the Minister for the Environment. In her own words, Ms Sharma has endured “absolutely vile racism”. The abuse is shocking and abhorrent. In some cases, this bullying and harassment might be criminal [fn: s 474.14 of the Criminal Code (Cth)]. But more fundamentally, it should offend our collective sense of decency.

Ms Sharma is 17 years old. She is a kind and beautiful person. She is passionate, caring and incredibly intelligent. She is a proud young Australian woman of colour having migrated to Australia with her family from India as a 10-month-old.

People under 18 do not have a say in electing a representative government. Our system does not allow children to vote. This case has given Anjali and other children opportunities to speak publicly about the impacts of climate change. The extent of harm from climate change is, and will be, widespread and immense. Such evidence was accepted by the Federal Court and was not disputed by the government.

When we, Ms Sharma’s lawyers, were students, we were not thinking about taking the government to court. We did not spend our weekends drafting op-eds on the dire state of our climate. Our biggest worries were exams and choosing a career.

In contrast, kids like Anjali are worried they won’t have a future. They are shouldering the burden of climate change, a problem they did not create, and are dedicating their lives to push for justice.

It is generally not fun to be a party to litigation. It is certainly not fun to receive online abuse. Young people are taking a stand because they feel they have to. In the face of a government that continues to approve fossil fuel projects, they took legal action to bring about desperately needed change.

Anjali and eight incredibly brave young people have spent two years of their lives dealing with publicity around the case whilst tackling major exams and working part time jobs. They have given heartfelt interviews, written pieces for media, and had cameras and adults watching them at every turn. They have acted with decorum and empathy.

To Anjali, Isolde, Ambrose, Tomas, Bella, Laura, Ava, Veronica and Luca, we are proud of you, inspired by you, and we will stand by you as your fight continues.

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