



Speech by

## Vaughan Johnson

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Hansard Thursday, 8 March 2007

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### MOTION: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Mr JOHNSON** (Gregory—NPA) (12.37 pm): I rise today with a great deal of trepidation to speak to this motion relating to International Women's Day. Many times we see differences of opinion in this place. I support the amendment moved to the motion by the member for Burdekin. I do not want to discount any of the speakers from the other side of the House. There are times when I am not proud to be called a bloke because of what happens in our everyday society in relation to crimes against women. There is one thing everybody in this House has in common and that is that we all had or do still have a mother. It is absolutely paramount that we respect those women, whether they are mothers or not. I am the father of two daughters and a son. My two daughters are now mothers and I am the proud grandfather of four beautiful little granddaughters. The point I make is that it is absolutely paramount that we recognise through the ages people like Caroline Chisholm, who, when this country was colonised all those years ago, pioneered to get a better deal for women.

We can look back through the years at what has happened to women in this state and nation, and today I want to talk about the sexual crimes against women in our community. In 2004-05, there were 5,419 sexual crimes committed against people; in 2005-06, this figure increased by 21 per cent to 6,558. Of those crimes which occurred in 2004-05, there were 1,354 reports of rape and attempted rape; in 2005-06, this increased to 1,444. In 2004-05, the number of other sexual offences reported was 4,065, and this increased to 5,114 in 2005-06. We must also remember that a lot of women and girls out there never report crimes committed against them and they carry those scars for the rest of their lives.

I say to the justice department that these limp-wristed magistrates need to get a bit tougher when these crimes are committed against women. We hear what is happening in the northern suburbs of Brisbane, where women cannot even enjoy recreational activities without risking their liberty being deprived. Sentencing has to be made tougher for these people.

I also want to canvass here today the plight of our Indigenous sisters who are incarcerated in this state because of acts of violence against them. There are 120 Indigenous women in our prisons today, and we have to look at the main reason for them being there—that is, they have had their liberty deprived by a drunken man who has been in a rage, probably because of that alcohol, and he could not control his sexual desires or emotions against those women and their children. That situation cannot be condoned any longer in this society.

The recent edition of the *Australian* magazine dated 6 or 7 March reported what is happening against women and kids in central Australia, but I have to say that it is not only happening in central Australia; it is happening in this state of ours which we are all a part of. Together we can do something about it and, as the Indigenous spokesman on this side of the House, I intend to do something about it. The issue is not about building more prisons for women in Queensland, especially in those Indigenous communities. It is about building diversionary centres where these women can be given the protection they deserve so they can go about their lives when their issue is resolved and some sanity and stabilisation can be returned to the community.

I say to the federal government too that the CDEP programs are not working. When we have men working four or five hours a week and sitting idle for the rest of their time, that is a recipe for disaster. We have to educate our society that women are not sex objects but they must be respected in the highest way for the integral roles they play and uphold in our everyday lives. In conclusion, former American President Thomas Jefferson said, 'All men are born equal'; let us never forget that women are a part of that equality. I hope we can make a difference in the lives of women in Queensland, especially our Indigenous sisters, as we go about making that change.