




Speech by

Michael Latter

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Hansard Thursday, 1 November 2012

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

 **Mr LATTER** (Waterford—LNP) (9.16 pm): While it is often a pleasure to engage with the community, there are times when the simple need itself can be a sad, if not tragic, indictment on our society. Both I and the member for Woodridge were recently invited to attend a candle-lighting ceremony by the Centre Against Sexual Violence in Logan Central which is an annual initiative under the Sexual Violence Awareness Month campaign. This year, as in previous years, the CASV joined together with the Murrigunyah Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Women to remember people who have suffered and are still suffering due to the impact of sexual violence on their lives by the lighting of candles and pausing to remember them and their struggles and healing.

The aims of the Sexual Violence Awareness Month campaign are to raise community awareness about the prevalence of sexual violence; to promote the prevention of sexual violence; to encourage the community to take a stand against sexual violence; to encourage those who have been and/or are experiencing sexual violence to seek assistance and support; and to encourage all members of the community to break the silence around sexual assault and abuse. Sexual violence is often a taboo topic of conversation, particularly for a survivor. The sense of shame and stigma surrounding this crime ensures this, and yet sexual violence can occur at any time and under any circumstances, without discrimination to gender, age, income level, profession or belief system. It can affect us all at some time in life, whether through personal experience or the experiences of those close to us.

While it is generally known that there are many cases of sexual assault that go unreported, the Australian Institute of Criminology have regrettably reported that the prevalence of sexual abuse occurs to one in three girls before the age of 18. Statistics also show that 27 per cent of total sexual assaults in Australia were perpetrated against females under the age of 14. These figures represent real people—someone's daughter, someone's wife, someone's mother or grandmother who are the victims of sexual assault and violence.

There is also a significant correlation between sexual violence and homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, imprisonment, physical complaints, parenting issues and problems with interpersonal relationships. As I mentioned at the beginning of this speech, the fact that occurrences of sexual violence facilitate the need for such awareness is indeed a sad indictment on our society. It is equally true that those people, the ladies and supporters of the Centre Against Sexual Violence and the Murrigunyah Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation, are a shining example of the efforts being made to address this disgraceful issue. I commend them for their support to victims and their ongoing efforts to raise awareness of this issue.