




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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ADJOURNMENT

Female Genital Mutilation

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (1.01 am): This morning I rise to discuss a topic of serious concern to the House. I will preface my contribution by going back to the beginning. Last week, I had the honour of attending the 27th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association seminar. I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie, and respective staff members for organising a truly excellent conference.

Mr Speaker, as you would be aware, as part of the conference program a session was held that focused on a parliamentarian's role in tackling domestic violence. That session was hosted by the Hon. Shannon Fentiman, the Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. In a spirit of bipartisanship, I wish to commend the minister for giving a comprehensive and professional speech about what the former LNP government did and the current Palaszczuk Labor government is doing to address and tackle the issue of domestic violence. During that discussion, a comment came from one of the African nations that was part of the assembled panel of parliamentarians. Where reference was made to whether we here in Queensland considered the issue of female genital mutilation as part of the overall framework of domestic violence, which leads me to draw the issue to the attention of the House.

Whilst members might think this issue is more predominant in other countries such as in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, where more than 200 million girls and women alive today have been surgically cut, that is not the case. The Melbourne Royal Women's Hospital has reported seeing 600 to 700 women annually who have been victims of some form of female genital mutilation. While the procedure is covered by state legislation and is illegal throughout Australia, it is suggested those incidents happen overseas or are conducted in private and remain secret. Upon further research, I was horrified to learn, via the World Health Organization, that the procedure intentionally alters or causes injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons and provides absolutely no health benefits for girls and women. Rather, female genital mutilation can have far-reaching consequences, including complications in childbirth and an increased risk of newborn death.

Furthermore, last Friday I attended the *Time of Others* exhibition at the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, where the honourable the Deputy Premier opened the proceedings. There I visited a most confronting display, a wall lined with what looked like white standard analog clocks. Upon closer inspection, those clocks were passing time at different speeds. I stepped closer to investigate and noticed each clock had a shocking world issue on them, including deforestation and death by stroke, as well as cases of female genital mutilation. I was shocked and appalled at the speed at which this clock passed the time between each statistical case of the procedure. The clock in the display certainly stood out. I am sure all members in this House could agree that we need to seriously look at ways to address and raise awareness of this cultural practice.