




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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ADJOURNMENT

Sexual Assault

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (7.06 pm): It has been an emotionally heavy day for me and my speech tonight is no different. Tonight I give a voice to a young woman who has been silenced for six years by her former teachers, by the council of her private school and by the Queensland state Department of Education. Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to ask you and all the members in this chamber to place yourselves into the shoes of this sexual assault survivor. You're a 13-year-old girl, an attentive student, a high achiever with aspirations to be an astronomer. Walking into your first science class of the year, you are in awe of your teacher, a man who claims he holds the accolade of Young Citizen of the Year. Within weeks you find yourself growing uncomfortable at the attention and sexual comments he is paying you, attention and comments that eventuate into inappropriate touching.

This man proceeded to leverage well-deserved grades for sexual payments. This survivor knew it was wrong and inappropriate for anyone, let alone her teacher, to be pressuring her in such a way and she told him that. Later that night the survivor told her family what happened and that was then told to the school. What is absolutely astounding is that in a meeting between the survivor, the school and the perpetrator, he admitted to his actions and still there were no consequences for him. After six years of toing and froing with the school to report the inappropriate conduct, this sexual assault survivor took matters into her own hands and called the Department of Education to report him herself only to be told that it was not their problem because she attended a private school.

I ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and implore the members in this chamber here today to imagine being that young woman seven years later, still holding on to hope that she will be delivered justice, still holding on to the guilt that, despite trying to report her perpetrator, he may assault another. Given the climate and the community pressure to see an end to sexual violence, the state Labor government must seize this opportunity to pursue workable solutions for women across Queensland. I will be seeking a meeting with the education minister to discuss the specifics of this case and to work through a solution so we can help this young woman.