




Speech By
Melissa McMahon

MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

Record of Proceedings, 24 March 2021

MOTION

Women

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.01 pm): I rise to support the motion. I was proud to join many Macalister constituents, amongst the thousands, at the Brisbane March 4 Justice last Monday. I was proud to see our Premier and cabinet members meeting marchers at the end. Women were angry when they took to the streets, but the incandescent rage that emanated after our Prime Minister's response was overwhelming. The tone deaf remarks about such marches that are met with bullets in other countries was astounding. Like many women, we are used to the gaslighting. We know what that means. We heard it: 'I have allowed you to have your say and I have not hit you, beaten you or shot you; what a great guy I am.'

The statistics are staggering regarding the experience of women and sexual harassment and sexual assault in this country. I look to those woman who have had the strength to come forward to talk about those experiences and I applaud their courage. When it comes to this experience, I have to say that I am no different. Given my previous employment in some of the most male dominated, testosterone-filled workplaces in the country, that would not be surprising to anyone here. I could stand here for an entire sitting week and not just three minutes talking about this. I put on a uniform at the age of 18 and I thought I was prepared. After all, I had already learnt at far too young an age that no good comes from being a female or appearing feminine. I adjusted my outlook on the world accordingly. I thought I was prepared.

At 21 years old being a trainee in a police car, I could count on one hand how many times I worked with another female in a car for an eight-hour shift. I was asked on a number of occasions by my senior male training officers up-front, at the start of the shift whether I was a dyke or a bike. In that first year I knew my place and how I was regarded by some of my colleagues—I was an object of disdain or otherwise.

It would take 16 years in the Army before I had a female commanding officer, and that opened my eyes. The calling out of the behaviour of my peers that she did was alien to me at the time. I had internalised it and I just outright expected it. I cannot thank her enough for opening my eyes.

Strange as it may seem given current circumstances, but the world of politics here in Queensland in this Labor government has been the most female dominated, safe and welcoming environment I have ever worked in. That of course does not take into account the commentary I hear over my shoulder on a regular basis. I support this motion.