




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

Record of Proceedings, 24 March 2021

MOTION

Women

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (3.21 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution in support of the Premier's motion. I, like other members here, was really proud to attend the March 4 Justice. It was a real privilege to be there and hear such powerful words spoken by victims, survivors and advocates. I want to express my thanks to everyone who turned out, everyone who spoke and especially to all those people who organised it, because I have no doubt that the hidden labour that went into organising that rally was largely done by women, as so much of it is more broadly across society.

On a personal note, I want to say how especially proud I was to hear my wife address that rally. That day she did not speak to her own experience of sexual assault and harassment; she spoke representing Children by Choice and directly to the relatively recent progress we have seen in advancing women's reproductive rights here in Queensland. It really helps us put into perspective just how painfully and unacceptably slow progress is on women's rights, not just here in Queensland but globally, and how extraordinarily hard we need to keep working to dismantle the patriarchy that has us stuck in this rut. There are centuries of legal and social patterns that need to be disrupted. It took almost 50 years of advocacy on the part of Children by Choice to finally see abortion decriminalised in Queensland, and that is something that I think we here should all be very proud of. More than anything we should be thankful to them for the work they put into it.

I want to thank Daile and the many other people in my life who have helped me understand more deeply what it means to be a good ally and to help me recognise that each and every one of us can do better. Each of us who enjoys privilege of any kind needs to recognise that we sit somewhere on a sliding scale of complicity as the owners of privilege, and as the occupiers of that privilege we are to some extent complicit in its perseverance. It is important to acknowledge as well that, as men, we do not deserve a medal. We do not reserve recognition for simply being an ally or for taking steps to call out rape culture. Each and every one of us needs to recognise that, if just being a decent human being is somehow noteworthy, it should tell us how low the bar is for men and just how far we have to go to see that course corrected.