




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Record of Proceedings, 24 March 2021

MOTION

Women

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (2.52 pm): I stand before the House today as a passionate ally and supporter of the courageous women, non-binary folk and men who exercised their democratic right to march last week in the Brisbane March 4 Justice. I won the lottery in life being born to a remarkably strong, intelligent and compassionate woman—my mother, Denise. Over the years she has told me about the entrenched sexism she experienced as a woman in Brisbane in the sixties and seventies. However, this attitudinal culture was not just entrenched with her generation; the issue has continued to persist through to today.

I would like to share the story of my dear friend Lauren, who is representative of the frustration and anger that many women continue to feel across society. Lauren is a tall, red-headed lady who was photographed holding a sign that proclaimed ‘#MeToo 1988. I was only 19’ and featured prominently in the footage of the march in both local and national media. It was the first time she had ever participated in a protest march and the first time she had ever publicly identified herself as a survivor of sexual assault. I say ‘survivor’ rather than ‘victim’ because she is one of the bravest and most tenacious people I have ever met. I am in awe of her resilience and quiet dignity over decades of trauma and challenges.

Lauren was an intelligent, ambitious and optimistic young Air Force officer when she was raped by fellow officers—air crew, no less—within a week of her arrival at her Air Force base back in 1988. As a young woman serving in the military, she was often treated as a commodity to be either toyed with or tolerated rather than as an equal. Her story is one that is regrettably all too common in our society. I have had firsthand knowledge as her friend of the trauma and injustice that women like Lauren have endured for decades.

The voices of women like Lauren and their allies, of whom I proudly count myself as one, are being heard more loudly now because they have had enough. The insidious rape culture, sexual harassment, sexist microaggressions, structural disempowerment and systems of patriarchal oppression that have endured for centuries in one form or another have no place in modern society. They have to stop now.

We need to understand that misogyny and sexism are not a spectrum or a sliding scale of harm, with off-colour blokey jokes at one end and the rape and murder of women at the other. They are in fact part of a system where minor acts committed or tolerated by many people prop up and sustain a culture that enables egregious abuse of privilege and physical power.

We need to recognise that women are more than just our wives, partners, mothers and daughters. They are no longer society’s handmaidens. They are individuals who deserve to be able to live, work and enjoy their lives in public spaces without fear of violence, harassment and disadvantage. We need to take them seriously and hear their concerns. We, as elected representatives, need to listen more and understand the important role we must play in dismantling systems of oppression and disadvantage, of levelling the playing field so that it is not just fair but also equitable and safe for all.