



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

International Women's Day

SPEECH

Monday, 29 February 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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<p>Date Monday, 29 February 2016 Page 17 Questioner Speaker Brodtmann, Gai, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (11:22): I am so pleased to have the opportunity to speak about International Women's Day, and I thank the member for Griffith for her motion. International Women's Day offers an opportunity to acknowledge the enormous achievements made by women throughout the world, both past and present. It is a day to celebrate those giants of history who fought for suffrage, who fought for reproductive rights, who fought for a place at the boardroom table and whose fight carries on today. Many of these fighters do not have their names recorded in history books. To them, I must express my gratitude, for without their tireless efforts I would not stand in this great chamber today, probably the member for Griffith would not stand in this chamber today, the member for Newcastle would not stand in this chamber today nor the member for Bendigo.

I also owe my place here to the working-class matriarchy of my great-grandmother, my grandmother and my mother. These women exemplified the hard-headed determination of those to whom this day is dedicated. Thanks to them, and those just like them, I have been able to run a successful business, sit on boards and be elected to parliament to proudly represent the people of Canberra.

Yet today, in spite of all that has already been achieved, the task remains unfinished. We must continue to fight for equal pay. Australian women are earning less today than they ever have when compared with their male colleagues. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the gender pay gap has soared to above 18 per cent—just outrageous. The data show that male salaries have increased by 2.9 per cent over the past year while, alarmingly, women's salaries have only gone up by 1.9 per cent.

We must also fight to improve the representation of women on boards. Research shows, again and again, that improving diversity on boards, including increasing the number of women has a positive impact on the performance of an organisation. And it is not just about women here; it also about people from a diverse range of backgrounds. Through the boards I have been a member of, both the commercial and the not-for-profit sector, I have seen the positive impacts firsthand. I have also seen some cynics who have doubted the need for diversity who have had their opinions completely turned around. They have seen the impact on the decision making, the benefit it delivers to decision making and, ultimately, to the bottom line.

We must also continue to fight to end violence against women. Violence against women in Australia is a deep-rooted cultural problem, and it is shocking. I know, Deputy Speaker Broadbent, you have spoken on this issue many, many times. One in three women in Australia has experienced physical violence. Almost one in five has been subjected to sexual assault. And one woman is killed by her partner or former partner every week. These figures are breathtakingly appalling. This is unacceptable; it is never acceptable. Family violence is violence and we must call it for what it is, whenever we see it. And, as with all forms of violence, we must do whatever we can to support those who feel its pain most sharply.

I also want to ensure that women have the financial literacy to plan for their retirement. I often speak with women, many of them retired, who are doing it tough living on the pension and living in social housing, quite often in the private rental market. I am worried that too many women have not planned for their future beyond work. I am worried that too many women do not have a plan for retirement.

Since I was elected, I have organised seminars to help women understand how much superannuation they have so they can work out how much they need for their retirement and how much they need to put away each week—bearing in mind that sometimes they are going to be in and out of part-time work and off having children, it factors in the fluctuations of their career. Understanding the detail of what they need for their retirement will allow them to better plan for their futures. A man is not a financial plan. Sisters, a man is not a financial plan nor should he be.

We have come a long way in the last 100 years, but our achievements have barely touched many women in developing countries. We still need to fight to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities are shared by our sisters

throughout the world. The member for Newcastle recently spoke about the trip we did to Cambodia with Save the Children, where we heard extraordinary stories from Save the Children and a range of NGOs about how they are making a huge difference in empowering women through microloans, through reproductive rights, through education on sexual harassment and what it actually looks like, and through postnatal and maternal health.

Those who have done so much throughout history entrust a responsibility in us to carry on their great work. Just as women of Australia's past have made possible the achievements of women of Australia's present, we bear the responsibility to improve the opportunities and outcomes of the next generation.