



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**GRIEVANCE DEBATE**

**Domestic Violence**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 26 May 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 26 May 2014  
**Page** 4298  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Broadbent, Russell, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr BROADBENT** (McMillan) (20:12): I was invited to speak at the Baw Baw community conversation along with representatives from the Gippsland Prevention of Men's Violence Against Women Strategy. I began my address by saying: 'This is not the first time that I walk this path in speaking on the issue of violence against women. In fact, I have spoken on it many times publicly and, let me say, privately amongst my friends and colleagues.' Firstly, I was surprised there were so many there. The theatre was full. We had representatives from the police from the family violence unit based out of Morwell and from agencies dealing with the issue, and they held a panel discussion after I spoke.

I am a male standing up talking about violence against women and taking charge of my responsibilities in regard to what happens in my community of Gippsland and across Australia. Every time you speak on something like that, you learn something. Whilst I knew it was the case, I did not realise it is the tiny words and the jokes about issues and women that grow into stronger words, and become part of the culture and then part of the process. Then they become a broken eye socket, a bashed nose, smashed teeth, torn muscles, wrecked work opportunities, embarrassment and shame.

I began my address on shame. That is, shame exhibited by the people—the females, in this case—who happened to be the victims. They are ashamed of themselves. Some are ashamed of themselves because they are ashamed that they got themselves in that position in the first place. Others are ashamed of themselves because of the way they end up looking or because they are told by the perpetrator that it was their fault. They believe it and this veil of shame comes over. Of course, I spoke differently at that function about shame than how I am talking to you about it now, because I have had a bit of time to think about what I said before.

The second thing I spoke about was respect. There is a complete and utter lack or absence of respect for the individual who you are bashing. Violence is a considered act. It is not something that just springs out of nowhere, because I think the males that I know do not resort to violence. I have been tempted plenty of times in my life, but not in regards to women. I have been angry, but that is not where my guilt lies. My guilt lies with every other male in Australia who at some point has remained silent. At some point on that sliding scale that I talked about—of sexism, racism and other remarks—he has remained silent instead of pulling the person up and saying: 'Not on my watch, not in my area, not in my football club and not in my family. We do not do that. We do not do it. Not in our community; that is not our way.'

My desire is for every man to take responsibility. This has been used so many times, until I found it a different context. It said, 'All that is needed for the forces of evil to succeed is for enough good men to remain silent.' I am not talking about the perpetrators here. I am talking about men who would never lay a hand on a woman, but what they would do is allow an inappropriate suggestion to pass. A child will pick that up like this: 'This is the respect dad has for mum. This is the respect Joe has for his girlfriend. This is the respect my elder brother has for the girls at school, if he can speak about them in this manner.' So the disrespect flows in and grows.

As the member for McMillan I want a cultural change across the whole of my electorate, because on the numbers there is a whole lot of men bashing their wives in my electorate right now. Right now at 8.18, there are families being wrecked; there are children being completely distressed, who will be a mess at school tomorrow; and there are women who will not be able to go to work.

The numbers and figures that I have got here are the numbers of people and the cost to this nation of men bashing women. That includes the hundreds, hundreds and hundreds of hours that they are unable to work and all those rotten excuses. I have told this story in the past. I was the employer of many women. Most of them were older women, because they had school-aged kids. They then came into our business whilst their kids were at school and stayed on. Most of my staff never left.

One young girl—but I have to be careful telling that story in this context. In fact, I should withdraw from telling it, except to say that the older women knew what was going on and they looked at me as if I was a dill, because my mindset could not conceive of what was happening around my workplace. I had no concept of family violence. It is just not part of our family. It is just not on. My extended family is the same, I believe.

But am I like every other male across Australia who believes that his extended family is not involved? If they are not, somebody, somewhere, is. It is not just tied into one community or one socioeconomic level of our society; it is everywhere, and it is a disgrace.

How do we call on the men of Australia to be men? Because men do not bash women. Strong men do not bash women. Men who are comfortable in their own skin do not bash women. Only weak men bash women. It is a power play.

It is all right to present the problem, but we need the help of good men. And I do not even see myself in the 'good' category, but I know good men. I know that we are going to need the help of the good men in the footy club, the round ball soccer club, the rugby club and the cricket club; we are going to need the help of the men in Rotary, Lions and all the other organisations you can think of. We are going to need men, in their own workplace, when they hear the story or when the dirty magazine is put up on the back of the toilet wall or when the pictures are put up—anything that demeans women or drags them down—to stamp on it then and there. Because it is not the little changes and it is not the little dirty book in the corner; it is the totality of the climb to violence. And respect—we have come to a place in this nation where respect is not No. 1, and we need that to change.