



Speech by

Rachel Nolan

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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PARLIAMENTARY AMNESTY GROUP: WHITE RIBBON DAY

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (4.25 p.m.): It is important to me to be able to speak today to the Amnesty motion. I thank the member for Murrumba for the wonderful work that he does to keep the Parliamentary Amnesty Group going and for giving me the opportunity to speak to this motion today. It is tremendously important that we as a state parliament call for an end to violence against women in the Solomon Islands. In the Solomon Islands, unlike here, sexual violence tragically continues to be a weapon in war. The concept of wiping out communities and raping and pillaging the women in those communities continues to happen in many parts of the world as a weapon of war. I have to say that as I stand here as a middle-class white woman in the Queensland parliament it does seem very distant from my own experience, but I think that it is something that all of us as women leaders and female leaders in our community need to be very attuned to.

Domestic violence, however, is tragically not at all something that is foreign to Australian women. The most recent statistics suggest that in Australia one out of five women will be sexually assaulted at some time in their lives. That applies to one in five women in any crowd, regardless of their cultural background. It is also the case that, in the recent statewide consultation the Queensland government undertook about our policy paper 'A Direction for Women for the Next Five Years', domestic violence was absolutely one of the leading issues for women in Queensland. I do not think that we should kid ourselves that violence against women does not occur to women just like us and women in our community every day of the week and every week of the year.

In the parliament we actively campaign to stop domestic violence and to achieve the social change that brings true equality—that is, self-respect among women and genuine respect from men. Feminism I think continues to be a wonderful goal that we should all strive for, because feminism gives women an opportunity to fulfil their own opportunities in life. It also gives the men in our community the opportunity to work with and have relationships with women who are truly realised people, and I think that that is a privilege for them as well. As Australian MPs and Australian women leaders, we call very loudly today for sexual violence in the context of war against women in the Solomon Islands to stop. We call for the Australian government to do more to stop it, and we hope that we, through Amnesty International, can genuinely bring human rights to women in that part of the world. I commend the motion to the House.