

**OGILVIE HIGH SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY FUNDRAISING BREAKFAST
SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY
PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AM
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
NEW Town, FRIDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Good morning everyone.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land – to pay respect to those that have passed before us and to acknowledge today’s Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.

I understand that today’s breakfast has a mother and daughter theme and also there is a focus on girl’s education. So I am delighted to be here with you this morning, a pleasure that is only marginally tainted by my general dislike for any kind of conversation before 8am! I am a mother of two daughters who have survived my parenting and have grown up to be wonderful women, whose company I love. In addition I have a great interest in education and girls’ education in particular. So the mother/daughter, girls’ education theme resonates with me strongly.

As a schoolgirl I was enormously lucky to have parents who valued education highly and encouraged me to work hard at school and obtain a professional qualification that would give me independence and financial security. They also valued the intellectual stimulation a good education provides. My mother resented that fact that she was not given more educational opportunities and made sure that I was given a lot of support to complete Year 12 and go on to University.

As a mother I wanted to offer my girls these same opportunities. I also encouraged them to play sport, as for me this was one of the reasons I enjoyed school so much. Both my girls finished Year 12 and went on to University but of course as teenagers they did not always take my advice. Three things come to mind. I suggested they should study a language through to Year 12, do debating and not shave their legs. We lived at New Norfolk and when the girls were in High School commuted to Hobart daily. I enjoyed French and German at school and have found this useful and had the idea that the during the daily commute we could spend 10 minutes or so learning some new words which I would write in a little notebook. This caused some grumbling and before long

the notebook disappeared, I think thrown out the window into the marsh between New Norfolk and Granton.

I suggested debating because public speaking is an important and useful skill. They gave this a bit of a go, but perhaps not as much as they could have done. And the 'no shaving of legs' was ignored. Of course I am sure lots of other advice was not always observed, such as if you have to drink alcohol, stick to beer and wine and avoid spirits and alcopops. And I tried to encourage them to be strong and confident and not to be pressured (by a boy or a girl) into doing anything they were uncomfortable doing or might regret later.

So why do I think it so important for girls to get a good education? This is because it is the first step towards gender equality and gender inequality lies beneath many of our social problems such as family and sexual violence. In addition we know that educating and empowering women also has wider social benefits such as improving health, quality of life and economic outcomes for families.

As is now well-known in Australia at least one woman is killed every week at the hands of a current or former partner.

One woman in three has been a victim of physical violence and one in five has experienced sexual violence since the age of fifteen.

Those aged between 18 and 24 are more likely to experience physical or sexual violence than women across all other age groups.

Violence occurs when someone believes they have the right to control and hold power over someone else. Whether it's physical, sexual, psychological, financial or any other type of control, many men have grown up to believe that they can tell women how to behave or what to do. But they can't. Both men and women deserve to be treated equally and with respect – in relationships and everywhere else.¹ This is quite a sensitive and grown-up topic, and the advice I offer is based on material from the Government's *Violence Against Women, Let's stop it at the start* programme² and the *Our Watch* website.³

The cycle of violence starts with respect.

¹ Our Watch, Teens and young adults, <http://www.ourwatch.org.au/Preventing-Violence/Teens-Young-Adults> accessed 5 September 2016.

² See: <https://www.respect.gov.au/>

³ <http://www.ourwatch.org.au/>

Not all disrespect towards women and girls results in violence. But all violence against women starts with disrespectful behaviour. We all form our beliefs from the world around us, what we see, hear and talk about. Sometimes, without meaning to, we ignore disrespectful behaviour, prefer not to get involved or make excuses for it.

Making fun of girls because of their appearance, or using gender as an insult, for example, 'don't throw like a girl', or 'don't be a girl' (if a boy is tearful) are forms of disrespect that may seem harmless at first in young people.

We can, without realising it, say and do things that make young people think that disrespectful and aggressive behaviours are acceptable. Three common ways in which we excuse or condone disrespectful or aggressive behaviour are: playing down disrespectful behaviour (it's just what boys do); accepting aggression as just part of being a boy (boys will be boys); blaming girls who are treated with disrespect.

So what can you do about the attitudes and beliefs, the social norms that underlie gender inequality and lead to gender violence? We can challenge gender stereotypes, rigid gender roles and the condoning of disrespectful behaviour.

For example, if someone makes a dumb joke about women or yells out to them on the street, *say something*. You're probably not the only one who thinks it stupid. Let the person know that what they said is wrong. Even simple things like not laughing at these jokes, or rolling your eyes and walking away can make a real difference because you are letting your friends know you think it is wrong without being aggressive or confrontational.

If someone you know is behaving in a controlling way towards their girlfriend, like telling her who and she can and can't hang out with, checking up on her all the time, criticising how she dresses, talk to her and see if she is okay. Being jealous and controlling is not a sign of love or commitment; it's a sign of violence.

If you hear people gossiping about a girl being a tart or a slut, speak up. Remind them that you don't usually talk about boys in this way. Boys who behave similarly are called a stallion, stud or legend. (There are some 220 words for a sexually promiscuous female, all of them derogatory and just 20 for a sexually promiscuous male, most of them flattering). This reflects the fact that girls are

treated as the gatekeepers of sexual activity. This leads to victim- blaming and rape myths.

If you hear someone saying something that blames a victim of sexual assault, by saying she shouldn't have accepted a lift, or asking if she was drunk or what she was wearing, ask them, 'What's that got to do with it?' Explain that those kind of views contribute to a society that excuses violence against women. And it makes victims think it is their fault and can stop them telling someone about it or get help, and it can let the perpetrator get away with it.

So, girls: get the best education you possibly can, and make the most of your talents; remember the importance of respect between people, no matter what their age, gender or background; have the courage to speak out against disrespectful attitudes and behaviours; don't be pressured by your friends into doing what you don't want to do (and I don't mean going for a swim or a run); and be nice to your Mum.

Thank you.