

**UNIONS TASMANIA INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH**  
**REMARKS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA, MONDAY 2 MARCH 2020**

I am proud to be here with you today to celebrate International Women's Day 2020.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and yet who continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

International Women's Day was first held in Europe in 1911 and in Australia in 1928 in Sydney. In the years that followed, it spread, and in 1975 the United Nations adopted 8<sup>th</sup> March as International Women's Day.

IWD has become a time to reflect on progress, to call for change and to celebrate the courage and determination of the women who have changed history, and those who will advance gender equality into the future.

Reflecting on progress, we have come a long way. Women are increasingly moving into leadership positions in Australian society. I am very proud as Tasmania's 28<sup>th</sup> Governor to be the first female Governor. In our State Parliament we have a female Speaker, the first female Leader of the Opposition, a female Attorney-General, who was our first female Speaker and the leader of the Greens is also a woman.

We have come a long way but there remains a long way to go. The pervasiveness of violence against women, our failure to reduce its incidence, exemplifies this. The reality of this was highlighted by the Queensland deaths of Hannah Clarke and her three children two weeks ago at the hands of her estranged husband who ambushed her in her car with the children and set it alight before killing himself at the scene.

That gender violence is widespread is well-known, that Australian men are killing their women partners or ex-partners at the rate of one a week is well-known despite domestic violence laws and the changes to the criminal justice system to better protect women.

Women such as Rosie Batty have helped raise public awareness of the problem of domestic and intimate partner violence. There are three lessons from this latest tragedy.

The first relates to the nature of family violence, namely that emotional abuse IS domestic violence and must be recognised as such by victims, perpetrators and society in general. A possessive, jealous and controlling partner is an abusive one and what they are capable of should not be underestimated.

According to her family and friends, because her partner did not hit her, Hannah Clarke was slow to recognise that the psychological suffering she endured for years was abuse because she equated abuse with physical violence. Rowan Baxter's controlling behaviour of his wife included ordering what she wore and dictating when they had sex. Even though they operated a fitness studio together Hannah was not allowed to wear shorts. She was not allowed to wear a bikini, which her family attributed at first to prudishness. If he did not get his own way, he would not speak to her for days. Using social media he contrived to portray a happy family life that was far from the truth.

Secondly, the death of Hannah and her children also shows the danger is not over after a woman manages to leave a relationship. In fact the first three or four months post-separation is the most dangerous time. After she left, he continued to harass her. He abducted one of the children and assaulted Hannah during an access visit.

The third point I want to highlight is the point that Hannah's friends and family have made. That the key to tackling violence against women is to tackle the underlying causes. Her friends have vowed to raise their sons differently to bring about real social change and propose to start a movement, Small Steps for Hannah. We cannot expect the criminal justice system to tackle the problem alone. Society as a whole has an important role to play.

That this tragedy has made more men realise they need help is encouraging – this morning's *Australian* reports there has been a 25% rise in the number

of male perpetrators seeking help to, in the newspaper's words, avoid becoming 'that man'.<sup>1</sup>

We have come a long way in terms of gender equality and we should celebrate that. More and more occupations are being opened up for women in the police force, the armed services, the trades and the professions. On the sporting field too with women's football (with the round and oval ball) and cricket teams. But more needs to be done for a gender equal world. And events such as this help to inspire and motivate us to fight for this.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Australian*, Monday 2 March 2020, page 3.