

#CHOOSEtoCHALLENGE

Firstly I would like to say thank you to Zonta for giving me the opportunity to say a few words at today's event. Over the past couple of years as I have become more interested in the feminist movement it has become extremely apparent to me that in order to make meaningful change we must choose to challenge *language*.

In 2020, The Guardian voted Julia Gillard's misogyny speech the most unforgettable moment of Australian television. Everyday thousands of politicians make speeches about a variety of issues. Then why has this speech stood out? At the heart of Gillard's speech she challenged language. She called out the sexist language that has become commonplace in society due to our *fundamental* failures to recognise the importance that language has over behaviour and culture.

As revealed in a BBC article, the sexism in our culture not only comes from what we say, but *how* we are saying it. The gendered structure of language has ingrained a male bias into our psyche, reinforced by *centuries* of discriminatory language. A prominent example of this is the use of the word "mankind" to identify humanity. This word excludes 49.6 % of the global population, yet we *continue* to use it!

After doing some research into the 2004 edition of the Australian Oxford Dictionary I found that the derivatives of the word "man" had more positive connotations such as "man of honour". This sounds harmless until contrasted with the negatively perceived derivatives of the word "woman" with phrases such as "woman of the streets" featuring before "women's suffrage" and "women's rights". Furthermore, Oxford Dictionaries use examples for words such as "nagging" were "nagging wife" and "rabid" was "rabid feminist". Thus in the very definitions of our language, patriarchal stereotypes are perpetuated.

How we speak is the basis for the construction of society. Language sets precedent for social systems such as schools, the workplace and political spheres.

I encourage you all to challenge the way we use language towards and about women in order to truly overturn these attitudes towards women so we can work towards a more inclusive world.