

17 June 2016

Death of Jo Cox MP - Media statement by Catherine Cusack MLC, Chair, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (Australia)

"Australia's Women Parliamentarians are shocked and dismayed by the death of our UK Colleague, Jo Cox MP. We share in grief for her family especially her children. On behalf of every Mum in politics, not only in Australia but around the world, the greatest fear we have to overcome in running for office is the potential impact of our careers on our children - and this tragic loss is the worst nightmare imaginable.

Last month in Amman, I chaired an International workshop on political violence against women in public life. Across all continents, cultures and language groups our common experience, collective sense of distress and unity of purpose was astonishing.

Violence - in all its forms, from bullying and harassment to murder is very real and we have decided as women MPs to undertake a major campaign raising awareness of the problem.

Our sister organisations in non-Commonwealth countries are also meeting the challenge. The NDA's #NotTheCost campaign <https://youtu.be/e9Oxy3JJvBU> is a resource we are all sharing to start a global campaign against political violence.

Every person who pedals racism, sexism and other forms of prejudice and hate is contributing to political violence, and today's events, like the massacre in Orlando are the direct result.

It is often said the overwhelmingly male perpetrators of violence are "mentally ill". Let me be crystal clear - these crimes do not pop out of nowhere - they are committed in an environment of division, hate and stereotyping. These crimes obviously do not happen in a climate of kindness.

A growing number of women MPs around the world are joining the important new discussion about the impact of political violence, and how we can counter it. The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians have made this the major focus of our next meeting in Bangladesh. Today's tragedy adds to our sense of urgency, determination and the important role women can play in changing the way the business of politics is being conducted in free countries. The hate and the nastiness can no longer be accepted or explained away."

Hon. Catherine Cusack MLC
Tel: 61 2 92302915
Mobile: 0418 332 244

www.catherinecusack.com.au