**Mission Against Misogyny**

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| **Language Features** | It is the 21st century and women are still facing belligerent, soul destroying behaviour from misogynistic men. I am not just talking about you and me, who go about our everyday life where it is a cultural standard to learn how to keep ourselves safe from men. But rather, I am talking about the most powerful women in the world. I am talking about the women who have overcome the obstacles of work inequality, pay gaps, and lapses in opportunities to be slandered and humiliated by those who should be considered their equals. I am talking about the media, Parliament House and the men who fill the seats of the Senate and the House of Representatives. From the malicious spreading of career destroying rumours to the distribution of distasteful comics with the entire purpose of humiliation; it is no wonder women continue to be the minority of those in politics. Even when they do break through these barriers, and accept that this is their reality; they face a brand-new reality. A reality where the most respected men in Australia are able to sexually harass and assault them, under the very roof that is designed to keep us and them safe, Parliament House. Welcome fellow student delegates of the QLD Youth Parliament, today I will be discussing the heart wrenching truth that has formed a dark shadow over the Australian Parliament. As a result of the evolving values, attitudes and beliefs in contemporary society; we are finally starting to see more women gaining momentum within the political world. This momentum is essential to create change in a society dictated by rape culture and toxic masculinity.  To the world Australia is seen as one of the most progressive countries. We are envied for being the land of the free and equal. We pride ourselves on the values we are perceived to uphold. So, if this is a true perception, why are the most powerful women such as; Julia Gillard, Julia Banks, and Kate Ellis treated in a horrendous and unjust manner? Why was it reported that Australia’s Federal Parliament is the most “unsafe workplace in the country?” (Landis-Hanley, 2021). That statement came directly from Julia Banks. Who, arguably, was the most powerful woman in parliament. And yet, even she suffered at the hands of a man who decided he had the right to place his hand on her thigh without her consent. Banks believed that enough change had been created within our societal structures that she could stand up and say something. However, her hope of equality was shattered when she was viciously bullied out of her job by those that needed to stand with her in protest. Why are those in charge of writing legislation turning a blind eye to what is happening directly under their roof? Power is not synonymous with consent. Toxic masculinity has become a wildfire threatening to incinerate our entire nation and is fuelled by the people responsible for completely shaping and protecting our nation. Australian Story episode *Chamber of Silence*, published by the ABC, portrays the collective experiences of misogynistic attitudes towards women in politics. The women were finally provided with a media outlet that listened and offered them a safe haven to talk about the embedded sexual culture of the Australian Government. A far reach from the common portrayal of women in politics who are solely judged on their looks rather than contribution to legislation. This is evidenced as the episode continues and the abhorrent way Ellis was treated by journalists is revealed. She was directly questioned if she was able to lead based on her gender. Any audience of this true story will be positioned to feel uncomfortable and outraged for the women who fight for justice in our country every single day.  Sexual harassment is rife in the political landscape, trickling down to the fabric of Australian society and culture. Ellis is just one woman drowning in a sea of injustice. Natasha Stott stated, during a Liberal Party gathering, a member approached Ellis, challenging her eligibility for her position when he asked, “how many blokes [did] you [sleep with] just to get into Parliament?” Leaving her feeling completely debilitated with humiliation. Knowing the entire room has the same assumption of her as a leader. How are we supposed to trust our male leaders to ensure the safety of women when they have zero respect for power and authority? The misogynistic attitude that women are incapable of achieving noteworthy careers without offering themselves sexually to men is outright dangerous and must be eradicated from our society. Alarmingly, in 2018 it was found that one in three Australian women have experienced workplace sexual harassment in the last five years (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2021). Despite this, only 17% of victims made an official complaint, reinforcing the suffocating culture of prejudice towards women in Australia. The chokehold of victims must end. Media and society must empower women to use our voices to advocate about the inequalities and injustices that bear their ugly face of bigotry. Make no mistake, addressing this issue is the responsibility of all of us.  Sickeningly, when a woman bolsters her courage to confront the unjustified sexism, women are villainised for their gender in workplaces. The article: ‘Playing the Gender Card, The Number One Reason why Women Blame their Gender for Bias at work’ by RealBusiness UK uses a lousy attempt to invalidate the impact of the misogyny that occurs in workplaces. The writer, Praseeda Nair, sets the tone of the article with an image of a woman covering her mouth with a piece of paper, with a sad face drawn over it. The image is used to position the reader to see the issue as a joke and one that has not underpinned Australia’s social structure for centuries. The writer continues to invalidate the issue and accusingly states, “The assumption is that these discussions have given women greater access to whipping out their gender card at any negative turn in their careers.” In his way, the writer has clearly aimed to gaslight any woman who has suffered a career setback due to male superiority. The complete disregard of the man who wrote the article is emulated by the male MP’s who dominate the Australian Parliament. The media’s inaccurate portrayal of sexism paints a tainted picture of intolerance that we must confront in order to foster a society of equality and respect.  As the next generation, we need to push for change! The Parliament’s continuous disregard for the safety of women has gone on for far too long. If Parliament will not advocate against the rape culture that has infected our society, it will continue to fester and rot, leaving women with the inevitable decay of their careers and self-worth. If anything, they are promoting a continuous cycle of abuse that cannot be tolerated. So here we stand; banging on the front door of the people put in place to protect our beautiful nation. They no longer have anywhere to hide. For once, they are the vulnerable ones. If we speak up, we can take the power and give it back to women. Only when women begin to be seen as human beings who are just as capable as men, can we truly consider Australia as the land of the free. | **Text Structures** |

**Reference List**

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