

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the hardworking people of the public service—of course there is always the minister's office—and those women whose shoulders we stand on, many of whom join us today. You must have wondered if this would ever come about. I congratulate you all, and I am pleased that you are here. We celebrate your contribution to this bill before us. This bill is here because of you.

We heard earlier this week impassioned contributions about the late John Cain and his emphasis on deep policy work. We know that we need to be courageous, and we need to channel John Cain sometimes. We need to raise awareness sometimes, because that can be effective. Sometimes the community evolves, which is always good when the march of progress means change, but it is not enough. We need to use the levers of government to make change, because we need to compel people to make change.

In four years of detailed consultations across all sectors, public, private and not-for-profit, 935 people and organisations have expressed their view, and I am sure many in the chamber today have been included in that. This is hard work, and this government has been very clear. I am very pleased, always, to point to our record: 50 per cent of this government's cabinet are women, and 50 per cent of appointments to government boards, as we heard earlier, are women.

**Ms Williams:** Fifty-three per cent.

**Ms RICHARDS:** Fifty-three per cent—yes, of course. And we are now requiring 50 per cent of court appointments to be women. Forty-eight per cent of the caucus are women, and many are here today. The scoreboard is clear. Equality is not negotiable.

I would also like to acknowledge the wise friendship I have with the member for Carrum, and the deep fury we discussed this morning when news came through of another tragic murder. We did discuss, early this morning, that deep fury and whether I ought also to acknowledge the pain of the families in Cranbourne. I choose not to name the man, but a terrible situation reached our courts this week, so it is with great sadness and fury that I honour the family of the women of Cranbourne who were murdered at the hands of people with whom they should have felt safe.

I have said before that my mother was a family violence worker, and I should say that at 88 she is still a person who campaigns to eradicate this scourge of family violence. Channelling my mother—with my mother's voice very clearly in my ear only couple of hours ago—I am conscious that we stand shoulder to shoulder with so many people who fought and celebrated this government's commitment to implement all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, backed with a \$2.9 billion investment.

We have listened to the experts who have told us that family violence is a gendered crime. The family violence royal commission told us that Victoria needed to establish a culture of non-violence and gender equality if we were to shape appropriate attitudes towards women. I read back on some contributions made by Jesuit Social Services, and I thank Julie Edwards for allowing me to use their insights. Gender inequality, Jesuit Social Services tell me, refers to how:

... narrow, rigid gender norms and stereotypes limit individuals and groups of both men and women, thereby preventing them from living fulfilling and productive lives where they can flourish and reach their full potential.

Gender inequality is problematic for both men and women. Gender norms and expectations that have historically limited women's participation in public life and the workforce, and today see high rates of violence against women perpetrated by men, are also having a detrimental impact on men and boys.

In my role of serving and representing the Cranbourne community I have been grateful for the wise counsel of organisations who likewise serve the people in my neighbourhood, and I would like to thank Kit McMahon from Women's Health in the South East for taking me on that journey. She tells me that this bill is historic and that as an industry and as a community they are taking the time to