



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

ADJOURNMENT

Motherhood

SPEECH

Tuesday, 13 February 2018

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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| Date Tuesday, 13 February 2018 | Source House |
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| Speaker O'Brien, Ted, MP | Question No. |

Mr TED O'BRIEN (Fairfax) (19:55): There is no greater responsibility in this world than that of parenthood, and the ultimate of all is motherhood. One may well ask: what do I know about motherhood? Well, as a 43-year-old man, not much. I don't know what it's like to be a mother and I never will. But I stand in this chamber today to speak about motherhood because, frankly, I'm in complete awe of it. As a society, there is no more important institution than that of family, and, within the family, there is no more important role than that of the mother.

My own mother, Bernice, had nine children, and I'm fortunate to be the youngest of them. My wife, Sophia, is now less than two weeks away from giving birth to our second child, and it's this impending event that has sharpened my mind and my focus on the miracle that is motherhood and the sanctity of life that it delivers. That's why I stand in the House today to pay tribute to all mothers, in particular, my wife, who has only a couple of weeks to go. A cynic would think I'm saying this because tomorrow is Valentine's Day—I just wish I was that smooth!

As a father, I know what it's like to absolutely love a child, to look into the eyes of my daughter—and, please God, soon also my son—and to feel that extraordinary connectedness and depth of love which is hard to put into words. But it blows my mind, my head spins, at the thought of how a mother must feel—the extent of connectedness, the depth of love that a mother must feel for her child. A mother who carries a child inside her, living as an extension of her—this is such a physical expression of their bond. Is it any wonder that mothers are so typically selfless when it comes to their children. It reminds me of a poem by Rudyard Kipling, *Mother o' Mine*:

If I were hanged on the highest hill,

Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

I know whose love would follow me still,

Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,

Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

I know whose tears would come down to me,

Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were damned of body and soul,

I know whose prayers would make me whole,

Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

Now, as we know, mothers aren't renowned in Australia for banging down the door of their local parliamentarians. Mothers don't seem to form national mother lobby groups across our nation. How they would ever have the time to do so beats me! So it begs the question, therefore: who is the voice of mothers? Well, we all are—each and every one of us in this parliament. If we truly believe, hand on heart, that there is no more important institution than that of family and that it's mothers who lie at the heart of that institution, if we truly believe that parenthood is the greatest responsibility and motherhood the ultimate of all, then in all our deliberations of public policy in this House, across every portfolio, we must have mothers at the forefront of our minds. Today I pay tribute to all mothers.

The SPEAKER: It being 8 pm, the House stands adjourned.

House adjourned at 20:00