



Georgia Taylor, Year 9

Whispers. Muttering. Sideways glances. Fear. Intimidation. Silence. If you wanted to describe the corridors of the Australian Parliament, then these words would be a good start. If you haven't realised already, Australian politics is not the easiest place for women to thrive. I believe that women experience misogyny, sexism and discrimination in Australian politics, and if we want our world to be a fairer and more equal place for women, we must first start in Parliament.

According to a survey made by the BBC, Australia ranks 50th in the world for female representation in Parliament and yet, until recently it's not an issue you hear talked about often. Another survey by the ABC, reported that 2 in 3 women in Parliament said they had witnessed bullying or harassment and 2 in 5 said they had experienced it themselves.

As a child have you ever wondered what it would be like to be famous? In 2007, during Julia Gillard's campaign for Prime Minister of Australia, Liberal Senator Bill Heffernan told her she was "deliberately barren" and unfit for leadership because she has no children. If the leaders of Australia are making these kinds of comments, then what can we expect for the rest of Australian women and attitudes toward them when we are governed by people who make these remarks? This is an example of the unfair and double standards that women experience in Australian politics. Have you ever heard a man called unfit for leadership because he doesn't have children? Because he isn't married? Because of his appearance? These are all examples of things that DO happen to women that hardly ever happen to men in politics.

Another problem that contributes to this issue is that when we have a limited number of women in higher power roles in politics, that immediately equates to fewer role models for young girls to aspire to. Without people to look up to, girls are less likely to go into that field, creating an endless cycle of fewer women going into Parliament and thus fewer women affecting cultural change.

If you want to truly realise how prevalent this issue is, you need not look past the recent headlines. Brittany Higgins was a political staffer working for the Liberal Party. She alleges she was raped by a fellow staffer in the Ministerial Office in 2019. It was not until February this year after she quit her job at the Parliament House that she felt able to come forward about the assault. Before February, Brittany was denied access to CCTV footage of the night of the assault, she was encouraged not to speak up about her case and was worried she would lose her job over this allegation. This case highlights the culture that is fundamentally wrong within politics, the culture that seems to favour perpetrators over victims and men over women.

There is hope though, for women in Australian politics. When Brittany spoke up about her assault, she inspired other women to come forward with stories similar to hers, challenging men to rethink their behaviour. If we have more role models like Brittany Higgins and Julia Gillard, there is no doubt that things will change.



Loreto Normanhurst

It is time for change and if no one is going to do anything about it, we will.

We will not be ignored.

We will speak up and force the misogynists to listen.

We will not be silenced.