

International Women's Day Speech –

Delivered by Year 10 Students Rasmus Borg and Seamus Meares

Empowerment. Equality. Respect. Three words that should define our society — yet for many women around the world, they remain out of reach.

As someone once said, “Gender equality is not a women’s issue. It’s a human rights issue — and it’s everybody’s responsibility.”

Today isn’t about blaming men. It’s about understanding the imbalance that still exists, and asking what WE can do to change it.

Let’s start with safety and respect.

According to UN Women and the World Health Organization, almost one in three women worldwide — over 700 million — will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. That means nearly 30 per cent of women aged 15 and over have lived with fear, harm, or trauma simply because of their gender. Globally in just one year, over 50,000 women and girls were killed by intimate partners or family members — that’s about one woman every ten minutes.

That isn’t happening somewhere distant or unreal. It affects the women in our lives — our mothers, sisters, teachers, friends, and future families. In Australia alone, only a month and half into the year – at least 7 women have been killed in a domestic violence incident. Violence isn’t just a women’s issue. It’s a human issue, and our silence allows it to continue.

Because Inequality also shows up in everyday life.

According to the United Nations, women globally spend around two and a half times more hours than men on unpaid domestic and care work, like cooking, cleaning, and caring for others. When both paid and unpaid work are counted together, women often work longer hours than men, yet this effort frequently goes unrecognised and unpaid.

Ask yourself — how long can a society ignore work that keeps homes running and families supported?

In the workforce, the gap continues.

U.N Women reports that women are paid, on average, only 77 to 80 cents for every dollar earned by men — even when doing the same work or work of equal value. This pay gap adds up over a lifetime, limiting women’s independence, opportunities, and financial security.

In many countries, women are also restricted by laws or systems that limit the jobs they can do or the opportunities they can access. As Michelle Obama famously said, “No

country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half its citizens.”

So why does this matter to us — especially in an all-boys school?

Because inequality doesn't exist in isolation. It affects the people we care about. The kind of men we become is defined not by what we ignore, but by what we stand up for. Respect is not passive. Equality requires action. Every one of us has a role, whether that's to listen, to educate others or helping to stand against abuse. Because when we help protect and respect the men and women in our lives, we build a society that values relationships which are built on trust and respect - not control and power.

Empowerment. Equality. Respect. Nothing more. Nothing less.

To our female members of staff – thank you for all you do – at the end of assembly our Leadership students will be handing out a little token of our thanks.

So today, let's remember that gender inequality affects everyone. When women are held back, society is held back.

As Bell Hooks said, “Feminism is for everybody.”

Let's bridge the gap together, to do this, we need to remember these key words that will initiate positive change; Empowerment. Equality. Respect.