

**VOICE TO PARLIAMENT  
ABORTION REFORM**

*Statement*

**HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan)** [5.29 pm]: I rise tonight to talk about a couple of things that are kind of intertwined. I will obviously proudly vote yes on the weekend. I am a proud supporter of my friend and colleague Hon Rosie Sahanna. I was slightly amused by the reaction of some opposition members today. When Hon Rosie Sahanna became the first Aboriginal member of the Legislative Council, they all stood up and had to welcome her proudly, yet when she stood up today to tell her story, we unfortunately found that a lot of our opposition colleagues were away on urgent parliamentary business.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** Be careful; the front bench was empty on your side.

**Hon LORNA HARPER:** We are aware of where our members of Parliament were. We are usually here.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** Be careful of that glass house.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Can we stay focused on the statement?

**Hon LORNA HARPER:** Thank you, President. I will continue, following those interjections from a white man sitting on the other side—sorry, Hon Dr Steve Thomas.

We saw today some of the passion and pride of my sister Hon Rosie Sahanna. I hope to see one of Hon Rosie Sahanna's daughters or granddaughters—girls rule here!—sitting in this Parliament or the federal Parliament one day. I believe that should not be far away. As a middle-class white woman—I used to be working class—I have never really experienced racism, apart from being called a sweaty jock by some English people, but I ignored them, so that is fine. I cannot imagine the comments and vitriol that First Nations people have had to endure. I have been very surprised by the vitriol that has been displayed during this campaign for the referendum on the Voice. I personally believe that the Voice will be a positive step forward. I believe that, as a country, we can listen to what our First Nations people have to say and move forward together. I have been looking at it as a positive thing. Apart from Hon Dr Steve Thomas being upset today about us heckling him from this side—he does his fair share from that side—I have not heard people from the Yes campaign being negative or saying anything detrimental. I do not see a No campaigner and start yelling and screaming at them, but, apparently, a lot of No campaigners—not all—think it is okay to shout abuse at me when I wear a Yes T-shirt or have a Yes sticker on my car. That was amazing! I was wondering why a man was staring at me. He was so abusive because he saw a Yes sticker. All I was doing was sitting in my car at the traffic lights. It is fairly simple. The way I see it, people will go to the ballot box and vote yes or no. That is where their choice will be made. They do not need to scream abuse at people. For some reason, somebody in my street thought it would be a good idea to rip up Yes campaign brochures and stick them through my letterbox last night, because I have a Yes poster in my front garden. Weird!

That takes me to the other negative comments that female MPs have been getting. I go back a few weeks to the abortion legislation reform. We were all trying to be respectful of each other, because we have such deep views, but then my staff alerted me to a person who was referenced here—I believe her name is Dr Joanna Howe and she is a professor of law from the University of Adelaide, a Rhodes scholar, Catholic and an antiabortion campaigner. She took some comments that I had made from the livestream or the archive and posted them on her Instagram account, and she attacked me. Until now, I have never mentioned her name.

**Hon Ayor Makur Chuot** interjected.

**Hon LORNA HARPER:** Yes, she attacked my colleague Hon Ayor Makur Chuot.

**Hon Ayor Makur Chuot:** And my children.

**Hon LORNA HARPER:** Yes; she said Hon Ayor Makur Chuot was not a real mother. It is amazing! I have seen her three babies. She attacked me and my beliefs. I do not remember attacking her or calling her out. I am really surprised that a professor of law who lectures at the University of Adelaide could misrepresent a bill so badly. She then went on to encourage her followers to attack me and leave offensive messages on my Instagram account and Facebook page, which I switched off because I was upset. My staff got to read them. According to her followers, I am a baby killer, a murderer, not fit to be in Parliament, a radical, highly offensive, gutless, coldblooded and a feminist extremist. They asked me whether we were selling body parts after abortions, which I find highly offensive, and it carried on.

When in society is it okay to say that to anybody? I am calling out these people again. I cannot say the word “hate”, but why is it that people who are negative hate so much? I do not remember going anywhere near her and saying, “You’re Catholic. Where I come from, you’re the enemy.” I do not remember saying, “You believe in God; I don’t, so you’re a terrible person.” No. I think that if they are someone’s beliefs, that is fine; they have their beliefs. But they should not judge other people. Somebody who claims to be a Catholic has gone out with messages of hate

against other people. If someone does not believe in abortion, that is perfectly fine; they will not access abortion. But as lawmakers and members of Parliament, we represent the community, and our community spoke very clearly in its feedback: it supported the bill going forward. I have a clear conscience for supporting that bill going forward. Let us be honest; I am not going to be looking at abortion services, but I have spoken to a lot of young women who will potentially have to make that choice. They 100 per cent support the bill, because, at the end of the day, it is their choice. It is not some fanatical law professor in South Australia's choice. It is not my choice what they do. It is their choice.

All I have to say is that if we disagree, we disagree. Hon Dr Steve Thomas and I disagree on many things, but we chat away quite happily together because there are many more things that we agree on. There are actually things that Dr Joanna Howe and I agree on. She is part of a law firm that is fighting for the rights of people on 457 visas and migrant workers. I agree with her 100 per cent on that; it is a great thing that she is doing, so why sully it by coming out with language of hate against other women who are trying to do their job and give people the opportunity to make choices for themselves? At the end of the day we will disagree on a lot of things, and we just let it go and carry on. There is no need for this hate and violence—yes, believe me, we have been threatened with violence at polling booths. Virginia, a lovely woman in my office, was called a racist for holding a Yes sign. She has a very loud laugh and everyone in Midland heard the laugh. Virginia is from India and she was going, “I’m the racist? I am Indian born and they’re calling me a racist because I support this.”

Let us try to understand that we do have differences of opinion. We are going to disagree. Does it mean that we hate each other? No; it just means that we disagree. Where it counts is at the ballot box. I have voted, but when I go to the ballot box and wear my pride, I can say that I have done everything I can to get this Voice up. If it gets up, I will be celebrating 100 per cent. If it does not, I will be joining the campaign to make sure that we get some damn changes in this country. Rosie might not have said it, but it has shone a light on Australia as a society and what it has shown is not nice.