



## Silent Tolerance Is Not Enough

BPW Australia President, Marilyn Forsythe, declares we need to speak up for tolerance and the positive community that we want, one that provides for equality of opportunity; respect for human rights; safety and freedom from violence; respect for gender equality - and a higher standard of respect within robust public debate.

In the past week – with the tragic Jill Meagher case in Melbourne, and Mr Alan Jones' comments regarding the Prime Minister's father (and revisiting his "chaff bag" statements about Prime Minister Gillard, Senator Bob Brown and MP Clover Moore) – the response from a wide range of people touched by these events has been heartening.

In two separate events, many people stood up and made a statement for a positive community, freedom from violence, and positive public discourse in Australia. Thousands in Brunswick took to their feet to acknowledge the passing of Jill Meagher, to reject violence and to restate the positive bonds of their community. In the same week, 36,000 people in 2-3 days signed the petition at [www.change.org](http://www.change.org) in response to Mr Jones' comments, demonstrating a desire for a more positive and civil public debate. Even in regional towns such as Deniliquin, in the Riverina, NSW, 2DQ radio station reportedly fielded many complaints about Mr Jones' statements leading to the station deciding to not air Mr Jones' program.

Ms Forsythe said there are many tolerant people in this country who are uncomfortable with the level of negativity and discord in public debate; who want a more connected community, respectful expression and exchange of alternate views; and they want and an end to gendered attacks. BPW Australia supports the recent statement by the Victorian Women's Trust calling for respect for women, girls and the democratic process. This is an essential ingredient to seeing more women step into leadership roles, one of our core ambitions.

"I encourage our members to be more than tolerant; we must give voice to our concerns and help create an environment where women can feel confident, safe and supported when they make that decision to step up and step out."

4 October 2012

For more information contact Marilyn Forsythe on 0412259656  
Media Contact: Sandra Cook, National Director of Policy 0409608344

BPW Australia develops the professional, leadership and business potential of women on all levels through advocacy, mentoring, networking, skill building and economic empowerment programs and projects around the world. For more information go to [www.bpw.com.au](http://www.bpw.com.au)