

# Monsters or Mice

## *Real Bravery in Today's Culture*

**SPEAKER** Hon. Nick Goiran

Let me start with a question: where were you when you walked into this conference this morning? Was it a place of pain or was it a place of peace? And if it was a place of peace, was it real peace? Or, to be truly honest with yourself, did you come in this morning wearing a mask? And how are you feeling now this afternoon? Just take a moment to ponder that. We'll come back to it.

### THE CULTURAL PERCEPTION OF MEN

But I'm going to take a step back because your organisers have asked me this afternoon to spend a few moments discussing how men are viewed in modern culture. I have had the privilege of serving in the Western Australian Parliament for the last 16 years. Sadly, I would say that the perception of men in modern culture has hardly changed during the past two decades.

Now, it would not be an exaggeration to say that in the minds of the mainstream media, as well as in the minds of many people in the public square, men are perceived as monsters. We could spend this afternoon reflecting on this, perhaps unpacking it and arguing that it is an unfair characterisation, or we can take a few moments to accept that this is the perception of so many. Of course, for some, it remains an unfair perception.

### PERCEPTIONS & TRAGIC REALITIES

But the truth is that there's a reason why men are perceived as monsters in modern Western Australian culture and indeed across the globe. I'll give you one quick example. At the end of last year, in December, very horrifically, a male who had been released from a Western Australian prison, where he had served time for sexually assaulting a teenage girl, was released into the community on what's called a post-sentence supervision order. This individual is now back before the courts charged with having raped a woman in her 40s as she left Whitford's train station one evening.

### CULTURAL CONFUSION AND IDENTITY

Now, in modern Western Australian culture, if that is what people are hearing about men, it is no wonder that they are perceived as monsters. But of course, this is nothing new, is it? Many of you, perhaps all of you here, are well-versed in the scriptures, and may I suggest that on certainly more than one occasion in life, King David was also a monster.

So this is not anything new: men might be perceived as monsters. However, the reality is, isn't it, that more often than not, despite that persona and perception, many men actually behave like mice? They are not prepared to step forward and be true leaders in their families or communities, being unfaithful to those closest to them, betraying that confidence, and abandoning families. We have record levels of divorce in Western Australia, and the family courts are flooded.

Now, of course, the fair-minded person will appreciate that it's not solely the fault of a single sex. But where does this idea of a man being a mouse fit into all of that? I would put to you, gentlemen, this afternoon that we are living in the most chaotic of times. Even spending a few moments to consider whether you think that men in Western Australia are perceived as monsters or whether they are more like mice or something in between, the reality is that we're living in a culture that is confused about what even a man is or what even a woman is.

We now have a truly mad situation in Western Australia where anyone in the audience today, as a matter of law, can apply to have their birth certificate changed if they are not happy that it records them as being a male and having had their sex observed at birth as male at birth. That's the culture that we're living in.

So, quite apart from whether men are monsters or mice, the bigger question at the moment, unbelievably, is: what is a man and what is a woman? There is no other way for me to put it to you than to say that this is absolute chaos.

## A PERSONAL LEGISLATIVE PERSPECTIVE

In the Western Australian Parliament, when I first started in 2009, one of the very first debates that arose was whether Western Australia should legalise prostitution. This was particularly troubling for me because my history prior to entering Parliament involved working as a lawyer primarily with victims of sexual abuse. That experience taught me that those who have been victims and survivors of sexual abuse live with the consequences of that betrayal and horror for a long time afterwards. Therefore, a truly mad thing would be for a group of legislators to legalise an inherently abusive industry.

## FAITHFULNESS AND SEXUAL ETHICS

In more recent times, particularly in the last year or so, there has been a significant debate in Western Australia regarding abortion legislation. It seems that expressing a contrary opinion in the public square is not permitted. Apparently, only one viewpoint is considered acceptable. However, at the heart of this issue surely lies the fact that there is such unfaithfulness when it comes to sexual relationships in Western Australia.

It would be a very rare circumstance in a faithful, monogamous marriage for a woman to find herself facing an unexpected pregnancy and considering an abortion. It is far more likely that this situation arises as a consequence of unfaithful sexual relations outside of marriage.

It's simply chaotic in Western Australia, and that's not something that surprises us, as we have seen this as a cycle since we first entered the world. Yet, for the 500 or so of us here this afternoon, we might all be in unison in agreeing that it is chaotic and feel so helpless.

## AFTER THE CONFERENCE: WHAT NEXT?

What do we do after today? You've had this enriching conference, but where do we go from here? Do we simply go home? We report back to our families and say it was a fantastic conference, that there were some great speakers. We prepare to enjoy the Lord's Day tomorrow, then we return to work on Monday, and it's business as usual. Is that the outcome any of you truly desire after investing this amount of time on a Saturday? When you see the chaos, the madness that allows people to change their birth certificates, where individuals are confused about what constitutes a woman and what constitutes a man, and when you know that the family courts are overwhelmed, with cases taking more than a year to even go to trial. What can we do about this?

Let me return to my original question, brothers. Where are you now? Where were you at this morning? Were you in a place of pain, or were you in a place of peace? Were you feeling light, or did you arrive here feeling heavy? And what can you do about this chaos?

## THE CIRCLE OF CONCERN VS THE CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

I want to share with you very briefly something I learnt from Stephen Covey. Stephen Covey, who has since passed away, is the author of the book "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." One of the many principles he discussed in this book is what he referred to as a circle of concern and a circle of influence. If he were here today, he would tell everyone in this audience that you all have a circle of concern and a circle of influence. What's the difference between the two?

Well, the circle of concern includes all those things we've just talked about- matters that we are concerned about. You might, like me, care about the possibility that someone has been accused of violently raping a woman in Whitfords. You might be concerned about the long waiting list in the family court. You may be concerned about the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. You may be concerned about the events in the Middle East. You might also be

concerned about the fact that in Western Australia, we can now ridiculously allow people to change the sex on their birth certificate. All of these matters might rightly concern you and will fall within that circle of concern.

And what Stephen Covey says in his book on *“The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People”* is that to be effective, one must always continue to work within our circle of influence. If you do, you will find that over time this circle of influence grows larger and larger. However, it will never be as big as the circle of concern. I suspect that none of us in this room will be in a position to do much more than pray—important as that is—regarding the war in Russia and Ukraine. It’s highly unlikely that any of us will reach a point where our circle of influence has grown to such an extent that we might be able to take action about that. Nevertheless, the principle holds true. We all have a circle of influence and something we can do about it.

### THREE ACTIONABLE STEPS

And I would like to leave you this afternoon, brothers, with three suggestions, particularly for those of you who came here this morning with a sense of peace. You felt light. Now, if you felt light and at peace this morning, that tells me that you have a great capacity to work within your circle of influence. There’s really no good reason, other than complacency, why you shouldn’t be working within that circle of influence. Here are three things that you might like to consider:

#### 1. Support Public Advocates

First and foremost, brothers, we need more people in the public square who are prepared to advocate based on fundamental principles that benefit every human being. What does that mean for you? It may mean identifying someone in your community whom you would like to encourage and personally support, and asking them to step forward into that particular role.

You might say that this isn’t for you. You might say that this isn’t your calling or your gift, and that’s okay. But surely each and every one of us can identify and support such a person. By doing so, you would work within your circle of influence to gradually extend that circle of concern.

Equally, one or more of you in the audience might feel called to step forward. I would be very happy to have that conversation with you offline after today.

But whether you feel personally called or are willing to identify and support that person is critically important if we are to see the perception of men in Western Australia transformed from one that views men as monsters to one that also recognises them as mice. Frankly, I believe it’s much more the former than the latter in modern culture, even though the latter may be more accurate. We need individuals in the public square who are prepared to do this. That cannot happen unless they are identified and supported.

#### 2. Recommit to Your Family

But in addition, brothers, there are two other things you can do in this circle of influence to smash this culture, this idea, this notion that men are monsters or mice. After today, as you drive home, I encourage you to rededicate and recommit yourself to your family. I don’t know everyone in this room, and each person has their own unique situation. Your family circumstances will differ. Whatever that looks like for you, the rededication and recommitment at a personal level to your family is something every one of us can do, even by taking away those very helpful practical suggestions given by the panellists earlier. The idea of being present is crucial. I regret that I haven’t been with you all today, but I imagine it’s not beyond the realm of possibility that someone at some point today has spoken to the husbands in the audience about the notion of cherishing your wife. What a high bar that is for all of us— one that I suspect you, like me, constantly struggle with. Yet, can we not today rededicate ourselves to that lofty goal, that aspiration we are called to pursue?

So that’s something we can do within our circle of influence. By loving and cherishing your wife, you’ll set a tremendous example for your children, who can then smash the idea that the modern-day man is either a monster or a mouse.

### ***3. Walk Beside the Hurting***

Finally, brothers, I would ask that you give serious consideration, if you are someone here who is feeling light and at peace, to identify and support public advocates in the square. Re-dedicate yourself to your family. Look around tomorrow. Just look around. I promise you that if you look around tomorrow, you will see at least one person in a place of pain. It is inconceivable that if you truly look around tomorrow, you will not see someone in a place of pain. We all then have an opportunity to do something for that person.

Now to those of you who came this morning in a place of pain, for whatever reason, can I tell you that you are not alone. You're already here among more than 500 brothers who I feel confident would be prepared to walk beside you, whatever is going on. And so brothers, if you are in a light place, if you are in a place of peace, and if it's not fake peace, and if you didn't walk in this morning with a mask because you are actually in a place of pain, can I ask you to look around tomorrow? Because I promise you there are so many who are in need of somebody simply to say to them, "It's okay, I'll walk beside you on this. You don't need to do this alone."

### **WALKING TOGETHER**

And if every one of us were to do that, we would absolutely be building that circle of influence greater and greater as we continue to encroach upon that circle of concern so that we might be able to smash this particular perception and culture, which ultimately comes from the devil, that men are all monsters or men are all mice. However, this can only be achieved if we all work together. After we walk through those doors and go home, we need to be prepared to take that step forward. A step forward, as men of courage!

Thank you very much for your attention this afternoon. From the bottom of my heart, I appreciate this tremendous privilege to spend a few moments with you today. Wishing you every blessing as you walk in faithful service to our Lord.