

[Senator DODSON](#) (Western Australia) (10:21): I wasn't intending to say anything, and I won't say anything that will be better than what my leader has said on this side of the house, but I am impressed by the fact that Australians can come together when we see things not up to the standard that we expect and that we try to inculcate into our society, and we ask others who carry the banners forward on our sporting fields and other places to stand up against ignorance, racism, bias and bigotry. It's a gratifying moment to see the parliament, and particularly this chamber, come as one, as it were. My recollection of this was previously when Senator Brandis was in here and spoke very strongly against an action taken by one of the senators.

We are a democracy. It is important that people say what they want to say in this place. But they've got to have responsibility. They are leaders; we are leaders. What we say is critical. It can hurt other people or influence the behaviour of others towards others. Our focus should definitely be on the respect for diversity and difference, and we should work to reconcile our differences with the First Nations. I believe that will help us as a nation go forward. It will resolve some of the residual remnants of racism and bigotry and hatred and misperception.

As you all know, I co-chair a joint select committee that is trying to find a way through that challenge. I would hope that our parliament, in fact, rises to the same tenor and calibre that we are exhibiting today when we come to those debates. Let's put ourselves beyond fundamental prejudices, and send a message to the world that we are a mature, modern democracy, capable of diversity and difference, welcoming diversity and difference, and using that to build our futures.

Let's not think of us not having achieved. We have achieved a great deal in this country—a great deal. We have yet more to achieve, and we will build on that achievement by reconciling with the First Nations. I support the motion and I congratulate those who have spoken before me.

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