Speech by

Mr DENVER BEANLAND

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (FAMILY PROTECTION) AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (10.56 p.m.): Two points need to be made at the outset of the Opposition's response to the Minister's second-reading speech and to the Bill under debate. The first point is that I believe that no member of this Parliament or, indeed, any decent member of the community condones domestic violence. On behalf of all members on this side of the House, I make no secret of our abhorrence of behaviours that involve one person intimidating, threatening, hurting or in any way degrading another, especially within the context of a spousal or family relationship. The second point is the despicable and provocative reference by the Minister to needed legislation collecting dust under what the Minister described as the "stewardship of members opposite".

As members on both sides of the House would know, the member for Beaudesert, when Minister, received many complaints about the shortcomings of the legislation and the ways in which it was administered. It was with the genuine desire to provide adequate and equitable protection for the elderly, for spouses of both genders and for children involved in incidents of domestic violence that my colleague had amended legislation drafted and consulted upon very widely. His proposed amendments were of major consequence and sought to put an end to some of the problem issues that had been evident for years when the coalition came to office in 1996. The previous Labor administration had been aware of these concerns in the community for years and had done absolutely nothing to correct the mischief that was generating hostility rather than dealing with it. As usual, this mean-spirited and Government-of-blame Minister simply cannot help herself and seems programmed to attack, belittle and denigrate the work of others in some pathetic and unprincipled effort to boost her own personal ego and her sagging image and reputation.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr BEANLAND: You made the attack, Minister. It was a disgraceful performance by you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Reeves): Order! I remind the member for Indooroopilly to speak through the Chair.

Mr BEANLAND: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Sullivan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Chermside will cease interjecting.

Mr BEANLAND: The Minister made a disgraceful attack on the coalition in her second-reading speech, and on behalf of members on this side of the Parliament I am going to correct that, because it is this side of the House that has led the charge against domestic violence, and the Minister knows it.

Mr Sullivan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Chermside!

Mr BEANLAND: In this instance, the facts should not be allowed to stand in the way of a cheap and untrue attack, with nothing but the barest and meanest of political motives—an insinuation that the Minister cares about the issue of domestic violence but others do not and that she is active in legislative reform while others were not.

Let us have a look at a few of these matters. The Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989 was proclaimed on 22 August 1989, as recommended by the Queensland Domestic Violence Task Force in its 1988 report Beyond These Walls, and it is that Act which this Government is now proposing to amend. The legislation was introduced into this Parliament by the then Minister, the Honourable Craig Sherrin, the then member for Mansfield and Minister for Family Services in the then National Party Government. I shall quote from his second-reading speech, as it is appropriate in view of the Minister's comments. He stated—

> "This Bill is but one of a range of initiatives being taken by the Queensland Government to support the family unit and, more particularly, to assist in alleviating and curtailing the problem of domestic violence in Queensland.
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> No one should doubt that the family is the natural and fundamental unit in our society. No other group is more important or more resilient. I hold the firm view that our society's strength is dependent on the successful functioning of the family unit which, when placed under stress, must be able to fulfil its unique and basic role. The widest possible protection and assistance needs to be given to the family unit and the institution of marriage.
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> The Queensland Government is committed to doing all in its power to promote the family unit and strengthen and support its role. Recently the Government has announced its intention to prepare a family policy that will include current and proposed initiatives designed to benefit families and promote positive family life.
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> Many victims of domestic violence have indicated that they do not wish to end their marriages. They just want the violence to stop. The proposed legislation may allow this to occur in those cases without the disintegration of the family unit.
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> The Government will be pushing ahead to implement the recommendations of the Task Force which it established to examine the issue of domestic violence between spouses. A number of initiatives, including a Domestic Violence Awareness Program, have already been implemented and more will occur in the coming months. These will include the formation of a Domestic Violence Council comprising community representatives and officers of relevant Departments, the functions of which will include monitoring the implementation of the legislation.
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> As with anything that is new and innovative, it should be expected that this legislation, once operationalised, may need fine-tuning."

That is exactly what this legislation is doing. It is making technical amendments in some cases, and amendments of some significance in other cases. These amendments will fine-tune this piece of legislation. The task force also recommended the establishment of the Queensland Domestic Violence Council and suggested that the council undertake research into legislative options for non-spousal domestic violence. Non-spousal domestic violence had been outside the terms of reference of the task force but had been raised in community consultation.

In 1994, Ms Susan Currie was engaged by the department to examine the options for legislating against non-spousal domestic violence. She presented her report entitled Legislative Options for Non-spousal Domestic Violence in June 1996. The report recommended significant broadening of the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989 to cover people in such circumstances as dating abuse, elder abuse and offences against people with disabilities. The report also recommended an overhaul of the Peace and Good Behaviour Act 1982 to provide adequate legislative protection for other people affected by domestic violence.

The Queensland Domestic Violence Council, together with a significant proportion of community organisations—particularly those in the domestic violence sector—did not support the extent of broadening recommended by Ms Currie. However, the Queensland Domestic Violence Council had previously forwarded to the former Minister recommendations for urgent amendments to the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989 aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Act.

During 1995 and 1996, the former Minister, Mr Lingard, the honourable member for Beaudesert, undertook to review the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act, broadening its coverage and making some technical amendments to address perceived problems in the legislation. Moreover, it was decided that the department should conduct a comprehensive review of legislation to ascertain any other aspects of the legislation requiring amendment before proceeding.

This departmental review had commenced in July 1995 when Mrs Margaret Woodgate was the Minister for Families. The review included policy and legislative issues. An information paper for community consultation on the proposed amendments was distributed on 12 January 1998. Community comments on the information paper closed on 27 February last year.

Of course, in the first half of 1998 there was a change of Minister and the member for Mulgrave, Mrs Naomi Wilson, became the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care. She therefore took on responsibility for this legislation.

I want to acknowledge the contributions that those former Ministers made to this Bill. As I have indicated, some work was undertaken in the first instance under Mrs Margaret Woodgate as Minister for Families from July 1995 to February 1996. This was followed up by my colleague, the then Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care, Kevin Lingard, the member for Beaudesert. As I have outlined, he made a major contribution to this legislation. He was followed for several months by the former member for Mulgrave, Mrs Naomi Wilson, who also made a significant contribution.

When the current Minister became Minister in June 1998 all that remained for her to do was to fine-tune the Bill as the real work had already been undertaken. The truth is that this Minister does not pay attention to what is included in her legislation, as has been evidenced in her earlier meagre offerings in this place. Sometimes it seems as if the Minister does not understand the meaning and the seriousness of the legislative proposals that are promoted.

Before I comment on the substance of the Bill, I want to draw attention to the lack of rigour and the lack of meaning in some of the comments which the Minister inflicted on the House in her second-reading speech. The Minister told us that, in the 10 years since the Act came into effect, 95 people in Queensland had been victims of spousal homicide. This tragic statistic, relating as it mostly does to periods of Labor administration, if one wants to get down to that kind of detail, is followed by a claim that the Act can provide early intervention and protection from further abuse. This type of ministerial comment is an insult to the intelligence of members of this House.

The Minister does not indicate anything about the comparative incidence of that type of homicide before and after the commencement of the Act. She does not offer the Parliament trend figures or any other supporting material. This is just a number which she has plucked out of the crimes statistics for the State. She expects us to be satisfied with such an inept choice of factual material to support her ministerial assertions.

It is not only a matter of what we get for our money from this Government; there is also the issue of what we do not get. The Minister offers us no analysis of the hundreds of complaints that would have been received in electoral offices across the State by members of all parties about the mischiefs that have resulted from the misuse of the Act—and there are some; it happens, unfortunately—nor do we hear any ministerial strategy to deal with or rectify these shortcomings.

I can tell the Minister that there will be a great many people who have looked for objective and well-intentioned assessments of domestic violence legislation and who will say that this offering is but a flop and that the Minister has let the side down.

The next point concerns the inconsistencies in the Minister's introductory speech. Having made a snide suggestion that members on this side of the House allowed dust to collect on the material being proposed for amendment to the Act, the Minister claimed that it was all to her credit that the comprehensive review of the Act was undertaken by the Minister's department over the last four years. It may have eluded the Minister that the major portion of the last four years was occupied by a coalition Government. Neither the Minister, nor any of her colleagues, has responsibility for most of the review process. The Minister's attempt to take credit for what others have done is a telling reflection of the type of person that she is and the type of character that she brings to this job.

One of the traditional courtesies in this place is giving decent acknowledgment to what others have done. There has been no respect paid to the concept of standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before. Instead, from the Minister we have yet again a cheap grasp for personal aggrandisement by making claims for oneself without the recognition of others. In the past few moments, I trust that I have suitably outlined the contribution of others.

That brings me to the next significant point that has been ignored by the Minister in her speech for obvious reasons—for not wanting to share the spotlight with anyone else or give credit to the Liberal or National Parties. In April of this year, the model domestic violence laws report was released and model legislation was produced. This model legislation included a report, which was commenced in September 1996 when the Liberal/National Federal Government convened the domestic violence forum in Canberra. This forum included representatives from each Australian State and Territory and Government departments, academics and non-Government organisations with an interest in addressing all issues relating to domestic violence. A number of recommendations came out of the forum, some of which related to reforms to laws dealing with domestic violence and the need for greater consistency. Although the need for consistency had been recognised previously by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, there have been specific initiatives dealing with the portability of orders, the relationship of orders with Family Law Court orders and the portability of New Zealand orders, which was raised at the forum.

After reviewing the existing laws, a working group of officials from the States and Territories and the Commonwealth prepared a discussion paper and prepared a revised model in the context of initiatives flowing from the forum for the national domestic violence summit. In November 1997, a discussion paper released by the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers at the domestic violence

summit requested interested persons and agencies to comment upon the paper's proposals. More than 120 detailed and thoughtful submissions were received as well as oral feedback from meetings organised throughout Australia by the Office of the Status of Women and State and Territory Governments.

Most submissions commented upon the 14 key issues identified in the discussion paper as being of particular significance. This working group included Dawn Ray from the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel and the Parliamentary Counsel's Committee, Kathy Daley and Heather Nancarrow of the Domestic Violence Prevention Unit of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. The Minister had, in fact, on the working group producing this report, including the model legislation, people from her own department. So much for the Minister's cheap political shots, which have highlighted the Minister's own lack of genuine concern and feeling for those who have suffered from domestic violence.

As members can see, this side of the Chamber, the Liberal and National Parties, have been far from sitting on their hands; in fact, they have played the lead role in introducing legislation not only in this State but also in preparing model legislation for this nation. I ask the Minister: are these amendments that we have before us today in line with this model legislation? If not, what are the differences? I have not attempted to go through the legislation to find the differences. I appreciate that there would be significant differences. However, I ask the Minister whether those changes are in line with the model legislation.

While I am referring to the role of the Federal Government, I want to take a moment to refer to another program that it has undertaken in the fight against domestic violence. In November 1997, Partnerships Against Domestic Violence was announced by the Prime Minister at the Heads of Government National Domestic Violence Summit. That program is underpinned by funding of $25.3m from the Government from January 1998 to June 2001. One of the key themes of Partnerships Against Domestic Violence is helping people in rural and remote communities. A number of current projects under the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program are being implemented in regional areas, including projects to expand information and referral services to women and children escaping domestic violence and addressing family violence in indigenous communities. The Government has committed a further $25m to June 2003 to renew the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program and to build on its success to achieve more effective prevention of domestic violence across Australia. It will contribute to strengthening families and communities with a focus on key areas such as community education, children affected by domestic violence, perpetrators of domestic violence and family violence in indigenous communities. Through that further allocation of funding, helping those people who are affected by domestic violence in rural and remote areas will continue to be a theme of the projects undertaken.

Not only does the Prime Minister, John Howard, deserve our congratulations but also Senator Jocelyn Newman, the Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women for the leading role that they are playing in achieving a better community understanding in the prevention of domestic violence across this nation. In addition, another $45m has been allocated by the Commonwealth Government to renew its commitment to supported accommodation assistance programs for another five years, subject to the negotiation of new agreements with the States. As well, in recent weeks the Commonwealth Government has allocated a further $45m as part of the goods and services tax arrangements, making a total of $90m of additional Commonwealth moneys for the SAAP program over five years. These support programs are for the homeless, which include, of course, women, men and children escaping domestic violence, which accounts for over half the total expenditure in this program and which, all up, will total well over $1,000m. So it is going to be quite a significant contribution.

This is an issue that not only do parliamentary members on both sides of the House take seriously but also our respective party organisations take very seriously indeed. I just want to make a few observations in relation to the Bill itself. As the Minister indicates, it has five major objectives: first, to improve the enforcement of the Act; secondly, to clarify existing provisions; thirdly, to eliminate unnecessary burdens on police and the courts; fourthly, to improve the security and protection of those escaping domestic violence; and, fifthly, to reflect amendments to the Family Law Act. In relation to the first of these, the Minister indicated that the word "knowingly" was to be removed from the legislation because a respondent successfully appealed against a breached conviction by arguing a lack of knowledge of the order despite having been served with it. Unfortunately, the Minister did not give us any details as to how that decision came about, or in which court it occurred, except to say that the change was based on that one successful appeal.

I appreciate that that in itself is of concern. However, I would appreciate some more details as to exactly the way in which that appeal occurred. Presumably, the court had some good reason for making the decision in that case. I particularly want to know whether the court made some observations about the need for legislative change or whether this change was decided by the department on

recommendation from the Minister. "Knowingly" seems a clear enough term and a fair expectation in relation to breached matters. I am not aware of what the Law Society and other people who, no doubt, were consulted in relation to the matter have said, including the Domestic Violence Council or the Bar Association.

It should be clear to the Minister that, in our multicultural society, it is not safe to assume that every person understands fully the meaning of a document or the outcome of a court hearing, or a police officer's advice or that of a court official. I simply ask the Minister: has she considered all sides of this issue and heard all the arguments? In the Minister's second-reading speech, we did not hear that. As for the removal of this requirement from this very sensitive piece of legislation, I also want to ensure that the matter has been covered fully and be convinced that we are not removing some safety feature from the Act. This is a very sensitive piece of legislation and, unfortunately, from time to time some mischief does occur under it—sometimes by accident; sometimes on purpose, I am sure. I think that it is imperative that the changes that are made are made with a great deal of care.

Another seemingly insignificant change that the Minister passes over in one brief sentence alters the definition of "spouse". The change involves replacing the words "man" and "woman" with "male" and "female". This is a much-needed change to ensure the protection of people under the age of 18 years and is fully supported by the Opposition. It was proposed by former Minister Lingard in his draft legislation.

I wish to move sequentially through some of the provisions of the Bill. In relation to the definition of "effective individual" within the employing agency, the Bill provides a less than adequate statement about the person and organisation upon whom heavy responsibility rests in relation to orders concerning respondents who have access to weapons through their employment. In any organisation this person should be rigorously defined in a way that indicates someone with a significant and relevant level of responsibility in the organisation, and someone with an appropriate knowledge of the requirements of the respondent's employment. It could be that a human resources unit within the firm that is comprised of relatively junior officers employs the staff.

On another issue, I notice that the Minister is no longer to approve forms for the purpose of the Act and that this duty now falls to the director-general of the Minister's department, as is the current practice across the Public Service. However, it seems a strange arrangement that the Director-General of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care should be responsible for the design of forms to be used by the police and the courts, and that there is no requirement for the director-general to get the agreement of either the police or the courts on this matter. I presume that, whilst it is not mentioned, consultation will occur. However, that is not spelt out or indicated in the Bill. As far as I can see, no other officer in the Minister's department has any duty under the Act in relation to this matter. Its implementation involves the police and court staff, yet neither of those departments has any input into the process for the approval of related forms. Perhaps there is some sort of logic to that. It is important that a good working relationship is maintained.

In relation to access to weapons for employment, certainly over a long period I have received complaints about this issue, and I am sure that most other members have also. This is not an issue that has been raised only recently. The question of weapons for employment purposes is a major issue, but the legislation makes no reference to it. For example, I have heard of a situation where a police officer who was the subject of a domestic violence order was unable to use a weapon whilst on duty, which caused some concern. I have also heard of similar cases involving security guards, kangaroo shooters and others. I am sure that other members have come across similar cases. This matter does not appear to have been addressed in any way. I would have liked to have seen some reference to it in the legislation. I would like to know whether or not some consideration had been given to the matter and, if so, what the outcome of that consideration has been.

As I say, this is a very difficult area but, nevertheless, some people need access to weapons for employment and so on. This is an area that generates many complaints and much anguish. Of course, the legislation deals with subjects that cause much anguish to one party or the other. It is a very sensitive piece of legislation. Therefore, we must ensure that any changes are made in the appropriate way. We must ensure that as much goodwill as possible—if that is at all possible—is generated. Unfortunately, such anguish can lead to more violence and we must take all steps possible to avoid that.

The important addition of steps to be taken by the court when a respondent has access to weapons through employment is marred by the inadequacy already referred to in the definition of "effective individual". There is a further and greater concern regarding such persons. They are placed at significant risk by being served with an order under clause 9, which inserts a new section 23A. That clause raises the possibility of a year in prison for an error in the disclosure of relevant information. The Bill should place upon the court a responsibility to at least ensure that this person is adequately informed and warned of the seriousness of these possible consequences. The legislation should make

this a clear duty of the clerk of the court, just as it is in relation to informing respondent spouses of the effect of orders that affect them.

I believe that the whole matter of dealing with the issues associated with weapons has been handled in an inappropriate way. For example, clause 10 of the Bill, which amends section 24 and provides for arrangements for the surrender of revoked or suspended licences, is also inadequate.

The release of a licence or a weapon to a police officer should be acknowledged by that officer by the giving of a receipt to the person surrendering the licence or weapon. I went through the legislation but I could see no such provision. What brought the matter to my attention was that such an acknowledgment is provided for, and properly so, in relation to a consignment to a dealer. Where that occurs, a receipt is given. People can get very angry about these matters and quite often that can lead to more violence. I think it is important that we ensure that a receipt is given, and then that person has one less matter to complain about. In that case, the person concerned is less likely to use violence against their partner. For the protection of both parties, the provision of receipts should be a statutory requirement. I believe that all members will quickly comprehend the problems that could arise if a receipt is not issued. This is an evident omission that needs to be corrected. It could be easily corrected by the police giving receipts, if not immediately then certainly within a 24-hour period. That would not be onerous.

I turn to the matter of working from premises and the need to collect tools of trade from premises. Complaints have been made to me on this matter over a long period. This issue is much like the need for access to weapons for employment. People have to go about their business, even with domestic violence orders against them and these matters have to be considered in detail.

Whilst I notice that the legislation covers part of this issue, I raise it here because I notice that only 44 written submissions were received on the issue and some 100 people attended regional forums in relation to it. I accept that the Minister met with peak domestic violence organisations. That is all contained within the Explanatory Notes to the Bill. However, there does not appear to have been a large attendance at the public forums that were held on this very sensitive and emotional issue. It is important that these matters are properly canvassed and that all the issues are looked at closely. Certainly there are no easy answers, but I believe that by taking a rigorous approach many of these matters can be appropriately addressed.

Clause 12 of the Bill inserts new section 25A, which relates to the ouster provisions. I think that all members understand the circumstances in which those provisions may need to be applied. However, I ask the Minister to outline the steps that she plans to take to allow for the equitable sale and distribution of the proceeds from the sale of a family home. For example, an issue arises if one spouse is prohibited from approaching or even phoning the other to discuss such matters, especially in circumstances where one party has a vested interest in keeping the other at bay. The parties would be unable to separate amicably and split the proceeds from the home and other assets held in joint tenancy. I notice that the Bill refers to the involvement of legal practitioners, but I ask for an assurance that this matter has been properly considered in all aspects. The last thing that we need are more problems in relation to the legislation.

I turn now to Division 2 of the Act and in particular the powers of the courts and magistrates to make temporary protection orders. There is an omission in relation to this very important power, which is that there is no prescribed time limit. No indication is given of how long a temporary order can last for. For example, in the legislation relating to child protection orders, this Parliament has rightly enacted provisions that place specific time limits on comparable orders relating to children. However, in this Bill, which affects whole families and has the very serious outcome of separating parents from children as well as separating spouses, there is no time limit on temporary protection orders. Therefore, I ask the Minister: what period is proposed under these temporary protection orders? Many people might take "temporary" to mean hours, others might take it to mean days and to others it might mean weeks. I presume it means days, but I await clarification of this.

One of the stated objectives of the Bill, as set out in the Minister's second-reading speech, was the improvement of the security and protection of women escaping domestic violence. I was a little shocked to see this gender specific statement of intent. We all know how important it is for women and children to be protected from domestic violence and we all abhor this and other forms of violence. However, the Minister also needs to send a statement to the significant minority of men who are victims of domestic violence. No mention has been made of this. There is no recognition of the fact that their plight is real or even exists, although I understand some 13% of the orders that have been made by the court have been made in favour of men. I do not think that in itself sends a particularly good message to the males out there who are also subjected to domestic violence. That is a significant percentage. All of us have real concerns for victims, irrespective of their gender.

There are some positives in the Bill. We are eager to see them implemented. However, until the shortcomings in the Bill and some of the issues that I have mentioned are addressed I cannot help feel that this is a bandaid treatment for what are some very deficient aspects of the legislation. Clause 19 of

the Bill places responsibility on the court to ensure that certain spouses understand such matters as the purpose and effect of a proposed order, the consequences of non-compliance with the order and the right to apply for the revocation or variation of that order. The provision even refers to the process that the court may use and helpfully provides some examples of the means by which this important function can be carried out. Presumably this has been included as a matter of fairness to compensate for the removal of the term "knowingly" referred to earlier.

In other words, the Bill sets out ways to ensure that people really understand what such an order is about and how it affects them personally. That all sounds reasonable. However, what it does not say—and we need not get too carried away with it or assume that it represents a significant advance in the area—is that the courts will now have to take this matter on board as an essential part of the order. Proposed section 50(4) spells out in words of few syllables that failure to comply with this section does not affect the validity of a domestic violence order. I accept that the previous provision was placed in the amendment to overcome the removal of the word "knowingly". But at the end of the day it does not mean much, because the next clause simply states that failure to comply with this section does not affect the validity of a domestic violence order. On the other hand, the Minister is acknowledging the importance of conveying to the parties a full appreciation of what an order means and is then saying in effect that it does not really make any difference if the court does not bother to explain the meaning of the order to the parties or to indicate their rights and responsibilities.

This Bill is supposed to address some of the most difficult and volatile situations in our society. What this Bill will do, in some instances, is create new uncertainties and new grievances. We can certainly do without new grievances. It certainly fails to address the broad spectrum of issues in respect of which there are concerns, and the Minister failed to make any reference to them in her second-reading speech. Likewise, I have indicated that no reference is made to the new Model Domestic Violence Laws Report. I again ask: are these amendments in line with that model and is the Minister planning to introduce legislation along the lines of the Model Domestic Violence Laws Report and, if so, when can we expect to receive it? This legislation was introduced some five months ago and has been left to gather dust. As I indicated previously, it is up to the Government to decide its legislative priorities. It has been no problem to introduce legislation on net bet and on a range of other matters and put it speedily through the Parliament, yet this legislation has not received the same treatment.

I wish to touch on one other matter, and I will not take up a great deal of time because the issue gets a lot of press coverage already. This is a significant issue in the community. I refer to the issue of indigenous domestic violence. Unfortunately, as I said, there is far too much of it and it gets far too much coverage in the media. The legislation is not specifically designed to relate to this area. However, it is acknowledged that in many cases—not only in indigenous communities but across-the-board—alcohol plays a major role in domestic violence. I would be pleased to hear from the Minister what additional programs she might be looking at to educate people who have problems with alcohol-induced violence. As I said, this does not relate simply to indigenous communities; a large degree of the domestic violence that we see across the whole nation is caused through excess alcohol consumption.

I thank the Minister's staff and departmental officers for the briefings in relation to the legislation. I look forward to the passing of this Bill, because even though it has some shortcomings, I know that it will contribute to making our domestic violence laws more effective. It certainly has the Opposition's support.