



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Domestic Violence Laws

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: All too often we hear stories about the shocking physical abuse of women, children and men by the people closest to them—often the very person they should be able to turn to for love, affection and support, not a black eye or a broken arm. Up until 1989 there was no civil protection from domestic violence in Queensland.

Today women and men in spousal relationships are able to obtain civil protection under the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989. Unfortunately, abuse and exploitation are not limited to spousal relationships. There are many intimate and family relationships in which people may be vulnerable to abuse. Older people and people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable.

The Beattie Government recognises the need to provide greater protection to Queenslanders. I am pleased to announce that Cabinet recently decided to expand our domestic violence laws to provide protection for people who are abused in informal care relationships, by relatives, or in other intimate personal relationships such as dating relationships.

Extending protection to these members of our community under the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989 will bring Queensland into line with the majority of other States and Territories and ensure that Queenslanders have the same level of protection against abuse as other Australians. The new laws will help address violence in families, particularly the alarming levels of indigenous family violence.

It is not always a spouse that is violent; it can be a father, mother, brother or uncle. Victims need protection from violence no matter who is the perpetrator. People do not have to live together to be abused; it can happen in a range of relationships, even when one is dating. This has been recognised in other jurisdictions. It is time that Queensland also faced this reality.

Perhaps the most vulnerable of all are people with disabilities and frail older people who are dependent on the care of others for their most basic needs. We have a duty to provide greater protection to those reliant on informal carers.

The proposed expansion of the Act will finally provide civil protection to these vulnerable people. Some people may ask why it is necessary to expand the domestic violence legislation when people can make complaints under the Criminal Code. The answer is simple and is repeated by many survivors of domestic violence who say, "I just want the violence to stop", and our experience of the domestic violence legislation over the past 10 years is that it has protected many people from further acts of violence.

The proposal to expand the legislation has been the subject of extensive public consultation under this Government and the previous Government. There is overwhelming community support for the laws to be changed. The vulnerable in our society depend upon us to ensure that this happens. I look forward to introducing the new laws to the Parliament early next year.
