



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (12.22 p.m.): I rise in support of the Domestic Violence Legislation Amendment Bill. I have no doubt that all members of this House would rather that legislation to address situations of domestic violence was unnecessary. It disgusts many members, myself included. Domestic violence at any level should be strongly condemned and those who inflict pain of this type should be ostracised from our society.

I thank God that I was fortunate enough to enjoy an upbringing free of this type of violence, and I pray that the situation within my family and many families will continue: a life free of domestic violence. Through my working life I have witnessed unwarranted acts of violence, mainly during my years in the hotel industry. It is a sad fact that alcohol, drugs and gambling can be a direct link to and cause of domestic violence. In my opinion, no real man would ever lift his hand to a woman or child. The member for Algester rightly used the adjective 'gutless', and I fully agree. It is indeed a gutless individual who inflicts pain or fear on another human being—family member, partner, or similar.

Our society has come a long way but it still needs to go much, much further. This legislation is a leap in the right direction. It is a sad fact that Her Majesty's state opposition has yet again shown how inept it is by opposing this legislation without presenting any real alternatives. This amendment introduces legislation that was developed after wide and lengthy consultation. For the first time, there will be legislative protection for a wide range of people not covered by previous legislation. The expansion of legislation to cover family members, people with disabilities, the elderly and people in dating relationships is one of this government's election commitments. The new legislation acknowledges not only that our communities have changed but also that it is critical for the health of our communities that these changes are reflected in the evolving nature of our laws. The Domestic Violence Legislation Amendment Bill recognises that our communities have changed, that the structure of the homes we live in has changed and that the relationships which exist within them have changed. The expansion of the domestic violence legislation will cover abuse between family members, abuse of older people and people with disabilities by their informal carers, and abuse in dating relationships.

This is an election commitment of the Beattie Labor government, one which was not made lightly. Over the past five years, the Department of Families, together with the Queensland Domestic Violence Council, has conducted an extensive review of the act. The core provisions of the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989 are retained and have not been amended. The significant changes to the legislation include the insertion of new provisions that expand the legislation to cover non-spousal, domestic and family violence. Importantly, the bill introduces the concept of domestic relationships and defines these as a spousal or spouse-like relationship, an intimate personal relationship, a family relationship or an informal care relationship. In doing this the bill enables people who are abused in these common types of domestic relationships to obtain domestic violence orders. The relationship does not have to be one of a sexual nature, and same sex relationships are included.

Broadly speaking, the Domestic Violence Legislation Amendment Bill seeks to improve and extend the coverage of the existing act so that equitable access to protection is available to a greater range of people affected by domestic and family violence. In practice, I believe it will make homes, communities and this part of our world a much safer place to live. I applaud the minister and her department for their extensive consultation and their positive attitude in attempting to address what is a blight on any society—domestic violence. I commend the bill to the House.