



Speech by

**CHRISTINE SMITH**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (7.08 p.m.): Yesterday I was proud to launch Domestic Violence Prevention Week on the Gold Coast. I am not proud that we still have domestic violence but proud that we are slowly breaking the silence that surrounds this subject. For too long it is a problem that has remained behind closed doors. Generations of women and children have suffered and are still suffering. Domestic abuse knows no class, age, nor geographical boundaries. At yesterday's launch, a field of broken dreams was planted in Kurrawa Park. Hundreds of pink and purple hearts, each with its own personal message, were planted in the park. Messages were from prisoners of the Numinbah Women's Prison, from children at the Broadbeach Special Education Unit and from victims and friends. This field of broken dreams is a very special tribute to those who have suffered through domestic violence. It is also a tribute to those who work so hard to stop the cycle. It will stay in the park for a week as a reminder of our need for vigilance.

Security and freedom from violence in our homes is not a privilege; it is a right. The Gold Coast is known to have the highest rate of reported domestic violence in Queensland. It is horrifying to think that in a place everyone thinks of as paradise, we have such an horrendous secret. Domestic violence affects all of us. Children of domestic violence have to face life without ever knowing peace and security. Studies have told us that often children of domestic violence end up as perpetrators themselves. Then we come to the question: who is the perpetrator and who is the victim?

Silence is one of our most dangerous enemies. We need to speak out and we need to act. Last October, my aunt was killed by her husband. He found out she was leaving him and he attacked her with an iron bar. She suffered horrific head injuries and died within minutes of the attack. No-one in my family knew of the abuse she had suffered over many years. She had not confided in anyone. I was very close to both my uncle and my aunt and I find it so hard to imagine how he could do that to his wife. I miss her very much, but strangely, I miss him also. The ongoing effects are shattering for my family, and even for my uncle. He has been charged with murder and is awaiting trial.

I would like to congratulate the Domestic Violence Service on the Gold Coast, and in particular Betty Taylor and Di McLeod for their dedication to such a complex problem. It is a tribute to them and to others like them that domestic violence is now being discussed at all levels of government. We must work together to ensure that the work already being done is effective and will make a real difference to the lives of the thousands of women and children whose most basic human rights are being violated every day. We have come a long way but there is still much further to go. Together we can make this happen.