



Speech by

Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TELEPHONE SERVICE

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.10 p.m.): Domestic violence victims have been left in the lurch by a government bungle to defund an existing service provider before a new permanent service is up and running. The decision of Families Minister, Judy Spence, to defund the Domestic Violence Telephone Service, a Sunshine Coast based state-wide service, is in itself a matter of great consternation. However, as organisations such as the Women's Legal Service and the Sunshine Coast Community Services Council are warning in letters to the Premier, which I table, the way the transition to a new service has been handled is very poor and has the potential to cause suffering to women and children.

This decision comes on top of the decision to defund the state-wide domestic resource services—another decision which is worrying providers of domestic violence care, particularly in light of the government's new policy to extend domestic violence laws to cover a wider category of victims of abuse. That policy is a laudable aim, but the resources need to be in place to do what the policy states it is going to do. Those resources have not been increased in line with the increased responsibilities. As the Women's Legal Service said in its letter to the Premier—

For our experience in this area, we have serious concerns for the safety of women and children because of this decision making. We urge you to reconsider the continuation of funding to the existing domestic violence telephone service until the new service is funded.

More than 5,000 calls per week will now be answered by an interim provider, Crisis Care, which is part of the Department of Families. Yet to do this work Crisis Care will need more funding. To pick up, almost overnight, all of the systems and protocols, even with the best of staff, is a huge ask and carries a great risk. And for what? As the Sunshine Coast Community Services Council chairperson, Jennie Harvie, said—

It is alarming that in this particular difficult and fraught area of care, there appears to have been little interest in undertaking a meaningful collaborative/consultative approach with the non-government sector.

It is more distressing in the face of our own community's recent experience of the life threatening nature of domestic violence—

Mr Terry Sullivan: Why don't you smile? Just smile once.

Miss SIMPSON: Someone in this chamber is casting a slur on the domestic violence workers who have been trying to provide this service. This service finished up on Tuesday, yet the new service provider will not be in place until June. In the meantime, more than 5,000 calls have been dumped on a department that does not have the funds to run this service. This is an atrocious way to manage a very serious issue, which apparently members opposite do not think is serious. They have no idea about the way this has been poorly handled.

The workers in this area are worried. They have a genuine concern for the women and children. The way this has been handled is appalling and dangerous, as the letters I have tabled show. The lack of consultation with the non-government sector about continuing to provide a quality of service is a disgrace. Continuity of care and appropriate protocols are important in that process.