



Speech by


## Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Tuesday, 29 November 2011

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### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (11.16 am): It is time that Labor and this Labor minister, Karen Struthers, came clean about why her department last year paid \$140,000 to an alleged rape victim in the care of the government. This smacks of hush money. This is about the government protecting itself rather than protecting a victim. I call on the minister to accept the victim's wishes that this victim does not want to be gagged. This is a double standard of a women's minister, Karen Struthers, who fudges around the serious issues in this state. I ask the minister not to further victimise this woman but to allow her to speak and to release her from this confidentiality agreement.

I ask the minister to reveal the truth. Why is there a continuing cover-up? The minister is a hypocrite by allowing this cover-up to continue. A \$140,000 compensation payout is a significant payout. I have to ask: was there a criminal investigation resulting from the evidence that was used as part of this compensation payout? One will never know because of the way that this government has a record of trying to hush people up and bullying people into silence. This is a disgraceful situation. I table a copy of a question on notice I asked.

*Tabled paper:* Answer to Question on Notice No. 1147 of 2011 regarding compensation for an alleged rape victim [\[6024\]](#).

Certainly, the answer does nothing to reveal why this young woman has been kept in a position of continuing confidentiality. This is a disgrace. It is a blight on the history of this state and the justice system.

After 20 years of this tired Labor government, it is time that domestic violence services received transparent and reliable funding. This need is reflected through such quandaries facing women as the fact that mothers of teenage boys cannot find crisis shelter with their own sons. They face the heartbreaking decision of remaining in the situation of violence and abuse or leaving their sons. The uncertainty of funding has also seen domestic violence services struggling to keep the doors open in some communities in our state. No-one should have to live in fear for their safety. But when domestic relationships fracture and the place which should be the safest becomes a place of violence and abuse, then people's private affairs become a public concern. We abhor violence against anyone—men or women—but the reality is that most domestic violence occurs against female victims, and that requires special attention.

Also, in Queensland about 30 per cent of homicides are as a result of domestic violence, which is the highest proportion of homicides in Australia. Breaking that cycle and empowering victims and making them safe is one of the reasons the LNP has announced that in government we will commit an additional \$750,000 over three years to the Women's Legal Service. This is an outstanding service. Over the years I have personally referred to it women in need and I have found that that service has provided a very timely and professional service to help these women when they were most vulnerable. Sadly, the Bligh Labor government has underfunded the Women's Legal Service to the extent that the service has had to turn away women in need, reduce services and cancel a regional help line. I implore the Labor government to match our commitment to properly fund this service.

All of our candidates—male and female—have made a commitment to work to minimise violence against women. Sadly, the Labor government Minister Karen Struthers has sought to politicise the trauma

of abuse against women by her selective agenda. The minister calls for the disendorsement of Mr Gavin King, ignoring the apology he made in good faith for words which he since stated do not reflect—

**Ms JONES:** I rise to a point of order.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kilburn): Order! Member for Maroochydore, I will take the point of order.

**Ms JONES:** It is not just the minister; 4,000 people have emailed Campbell Newman and his Facebook page—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. Member for Maroochydore, whilst we have stopped, you used a term that was unparliamentary before in relation to the minister. I ask that you withdraw it

**Ms SIMPSON:** What term was that?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** You named the minister as being something. You need to withdraw.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I withdraw. It is interesting to note that the minister has ignored the fact that her own colleague Kerry Shine made comments as the chief law officer—or perhaps she has accepted his apology—when he suggested that some rapes were not as bad as others. The comments of both men were unacceptable and both have apologised. And so they should and we accept that. But this minister is more interested in partisan point-scoring.

**Mr SHINE:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member misquoted me. I find her remarks offensive and I ask that they be withdrawn.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** There is a correct way to deal with things if you think that you have been misquoted. Member for Maroochydore, the member finds those comments offensive and has asked that they be withdrawn.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, the member did make comments about varying rates of impact of rape, which were completely offensive to all women in this state.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Maroochydore, the member has found them offensive and has asked for them to be withdrawn. You can withdraw or not. It is up to you. I ask you to make a decision on that.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I withdraw. I note that the member did make comments in regard to women and rape and he apologised. Yet this minister has ignored her own colleague's comments. We are saying that we want to stand up for women in this state. I have outlined the double standard of this government in regard to the compensation payment and the gag order against an alleged rape victim in Queensland—a rape victim who was in the care of this state.

Enough is enough. We must stand up for all victims of violence. But this cover-up with this government is hypocritical. It is intolerable. It is time that gag order was lifted and that this victim was allowed to speak once and for all so that the truth is out and justice is done.

*(Time expired)*