




Speech by

Christine Smith

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION BILL

 **Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (4.24 pm): Domestic violence is a scourge on our community. It affects individuals, families and neighbourhoods and its devastating impacts can continue for generations. The Domestic and Family Violence Protection Bill introduces an important change to community safety policy in this state. It is about protecting some of our community's most vulnerable people from physical and mental harm and, in many cases, death. The main provisions of the bill are to prevent or reduce domestic violence, maximise the safety and protection of victims and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

The culture of fear, secrecy and shame surrounding this issue is a sinister pall under which cowards prosper and good people suffer. It is ever present yet remains hidden in the shadows. Domestic violence affects every element of a victim's life. Not only does it leave physical and emotional scars; it can also influence education and employment opportunities, leading to greater social inequity.

This bill will update the Criminal Code to ensure greater protection for victims of domestic violence. Women and children die as a result of domestic violence. I recently attended a Red Rose Rally outside the Southport Courthouse to draw attention to another woman's death attributable to domestic violence. As a member of the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Round Table, I am proud to have worked closely with some amazing people. One is Di Macleod. Di's long-term commitment has seen her counsel thousands of women, establish the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence and ensure that this important issue remains firmly on the public agenda. I asked Di if she would like to contribute to today's debate with a comment. She said—

I believe that the law and the legal system is a critical piece of the coordinated response to domestic and family violence. If its response is indifferent or ineffective, victims are left vulnerable, offenders are not held accountable and communities are less safe. This new legislation is a step in the right direction and demonstrates that this government is serious about addressing domestic and family violence in Queensland. I hope that this new legislation will afford greater protection to, and maximise the safety of, victims of domestic violence and hold perpetrators more accountable for their actions.

Betty Taylor is another champion of the abused and vulnerable on the Gold Coast. She is the founder and previous director of the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast and continues to work towards the establishment of a Domestic Violence Death Review Board in Queensland. Betty made the following comment—

The amended bill, when enacted, will go a long way towards enhanced protection of those who experience domestic and family violence. Violence in all its forms has no place within intimate and familial relationships and we as a community need to ensure that protection and support is readily available when needed. Hopefully early intervention will result in a reduction of the unacceptable number of homicides occurring each year.

A long-running program in Queensland is the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response, a community based program that has been operating since 1996. It was developed following community discussions about the high incidence of domestic violence and domestic homicides on the Gold Coast. The local Magistrates Court currently records the highest number of applications for domestic violence protection orders in Queensland. The Gold Coast is home to both men and women who are committed to addressing the incidence of domestic and family violence and ensuring that victims can live in peace and safety. Women like Di Macleod, Betty Taylor and Donna Justo, from the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre, are strong advocates for those experiencing domestic and family violence. Their passion and advocacy makes a huge difference to victims' lives and I stand in awe of their commitment to our community. I commend the bill to the House.