




Speech by

Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard Thursday, 16 February 2012

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION BILL

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.55 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Bill. From the outset, I commend the shadow minister, my colleague and Sunshine Coast neighbour the member for Maroochydore, on her contribution to this debate.

It is vitally important that we recognise the impact of domestic violence in our broader community. As legislators we must do all that we can to prevent or reduce violence and the exposure of children to violence and ensure that offenders are held accountable for their actions. I note statistics reported in the explanatory notes that in 2009-10 there was an 11.5 per cent increase in reported cases of domestic violence in Queensland on the previous year.

The bill before the House seeks to provide additional support and protection for victims of domestic or family violence. I have concerns that the minister may care to address in her reply with respect to the courts, particularly the Magistrates Court or the Children's Court, and these matters being dealt with in a timely fashion. As we know, under the stewardship of this long-term Labor government, which has been in power for 20 out of 22 years, our courts have been backlogged with cases.

Mr Wettenhall interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am constantly receiving complaints, as, I am sure, the member for Barron River is in his area, about time frames and the time it takes for matters to be brought before some of our courts. Of course, it is no reflection on the judiciary; it is a reflection on this government's lack of regard for processes and underresourcing.

Mr Wettenhall: Our courts are very efficient in Cairns. You shouldn't be criticising them.

Mr BLEIJIE: The courts are efficient, member for Barron River. It is the Labor Party that is inefficient. That was my point.

Mr Wettenhall: You should not be criticising the magistrates and the judges, who are very hardworking.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am not, member for Barron River; I am criticising—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! The member for Barron River will cease interjecting. The member for Kawana will refer his comments through the chair and he will come back to the provisions of the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. This bill will have quite a significant impact on our courts in Queensland, so I am expressing the concern that our courts are fully resourced to deal with these matters. I seek that confirmation from the minister in her reply speech.

I would also appreciate the minister's confirmation of what additional resources will be made available to the Magistrates Court in recognition of the additional workload and the training requirements this bill may give rise to. I note from the explanatory notes that the estimated cost for the government implementation will involve 'training, IT and data system modification and the development and production

of forms, policies, procedures and information resources'. I would appreciate further clarification with respect to all of those costs and any costs to our court system.

The LNP and all members in this House would detest violence against women. We would detest violence against anyone. I recently had the pleasure of meeting with the great women down at the Women's Legal Service in Annerley with respect to their operation and the great work they do. For members who do not know, they do make support services available in terms of legal work for women suffering domestic violence.

Like any community legal centre, the Women's Legal Service is forever in need of additional resources and funding to make sure its operations are successful and that it can keep contributing the good work they do for the Queensland public. It is tragic that more women are killed by their partners in Queensland than in any other state, while sexual violence affects one in five Australian women and physical violence affects one in three Australian women.

I had the pleasure of meeting with the Women's Legal Service and those who provide these vital services. They met with me both at Parliament House and on site at their operation and they explained to me the difficulty they were having in meeting all of the community expectations and obligations they thought they owed to the community, particularly the women who were suffering domestic violence. Following the meeting and some further discussions with them, I was pleased to announce that the Liberal National Party would grant \$750,000 over three years for women suffering domestic violence. There is no doubt that once this bill we are debating today is enacted the Women's Legal Service will be able to provide the sort of support and assistance that women deserve.

We had a great onsite meeting with the women running the Women's Legal Service, and I congratulate them for the great work they do. They also ran the rural women's help line. It was basically run from here in Brisbane but was open to women right across Queensland for these types of issues. Because of the underfunding by the Labor government, the Women's Legal Service had to cease that operation. I am hoping that when they access the \$750,000 that the LNP announced they will be able to put these services back in operation, particularly the rural help line.

When I was at the Women's Legal Service, they told me that they had to turn away seven women from their front door the night before and that many hundreds of calls went unanswered on the rural help line and the operation they had there. Whatever the Liberal National Party can do to assist more women to get the service and advice they need, particularly through the Women's Legal Service, it should be encouraged.

The Women's Legal Service assists some 5,000 women every year through the provision of free legal advice on areas of law including domestic violence, protection orders, rape and incest. As I said, at the time the Liberal National Party announced the \$750,000 over three years for the Women's Legal Service, I asked the government to match our commitment so that the Women's Legal Service did not have to turn away women every night and so that rural women across Queensland could have access to a hotline for these types of services. It was some months ago that I asked the government to match the \$750,000 and I am displeased to say that there has been no funding announcement from the government. There has been no funding announcement from the Labor Party to match our \$750,000 over three years.

The Liberal National Party is serious about these issues. We are serious about making sure women are not turned away on a nightly basis from the services they should have the right to go to. I congratulate the Women's Legal Service. This is a major policy that the Liberal National Party has announced. We announced it because it is something that just needed to happen. I think people are sick and tired of these women being turned away every night and not being able to phone in appropriate circumstances. I call on the government and the minister again to match the \$750,000 that the Liberal National Party announced some months ago.