




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MOTION: SPECIAL TASKFOCE ON DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (6.25 pm): This evening I rise to also provide support to the motion and thank the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence established by the previous government, with bipartisan support and input, and express my appreciation to all those who contributed and made submissions to the final *Not now, not ever* report, which made 140 recommendations to put an end to domestic and family violence. As a regional member, I am pleased at the bipartisan commitment to the Bryce report's recommendations, and I particularly thank those regional Queenslanders who contributed to it through the consultations. There are a number of recommendations aimed at addressing the regional disadvantage in responding to domestic and family violence. The fantastic organisation operating in my electorate, Life Without Barriers, put it so succinctly in its submission to the task force—

While domestic and family violence is prevalent across Queensland, people in regional and remote areas face particular issues associated with the smaller size of communities and the consequent difficulties in seeking help without escalating the abuse. In these locations there are fewer services and greater distances between those services.

The government has committed to trialling an integrated response in a regional centre with outreach to rural and remote communities, and the statewide audit of support services being conducted by KPMG will no doubt highlight the particular pressures on regional communities to both access and deliver services.

There are a number of initiatives to counter domestic violence, and I welcome the outstanding support given by the Premier and cabinet ministers to responding to the increasing and tragic deaths that have occurred too recently. To put it clearly, from 2006 to 2013 Queensland experienced 180 deaths in the context of domestic and family violence. Each one of those deaths not only affect the immediate family members but rock communities to their very core. To those who respond to such violent and horrific incidents, I can only say—and, unfortunately, I know that a number of members of this House have worked in front-line emergency services or health areas—that those memories stay with you forever. I will touch briefly on a couple of experiences that remain ingrained in my memory. Domestic violence does not discriminate. From precious and innocent children to partners to the elderly, domestic violence in my mind has become this state's major and social health challenge. This is a complex issue with significant crossover with alcohol and drug related issues, so we certainly have a job ahead of us in the Queensland government.

The cases I speak of were extremely violent. The first was a house we entered as paramedics to find a middle-age lady laying in a pool of blood. I thought she was deceased. Her face was completely unrecognisable and she was barely alive, deeply unconscious. Her partner lay in another part of the house with a knife still stuck in his chest from a self-inflicted wound. His shoes and socks were covered in her blood. It took all of my effort to treat that person whilst with the only obvious injury he was awake and conscious. That was the only silent trip I can remember in an ambulance over 25 years.

The second was just as violent, however more recent. Forty-seven stab wounds says it all. I cannot really articulate that scene. It will live with me and a lot of other people forever. That lady was taking her last breaths as I arrived. She died in front of me. It was difficult to even know where to start. She simply bled out. I could go on: an 18-month-old with multiple stab wounds. I think the point is made.

I do worry about our younger and new emergency services staff who no doubt will be exposed to this type of violence in our community. So I say enough is enough. What we are seeing is barely the tip of the iceberg. For those victims I have spoken about or who have recently shocked all of us in our state, it is what is happening behind closed doors that should be of concern. Action needs to be taken well before these violent, horrific incidents occur. I commend the Premier on her strong stance to address this issue and the other members of the parliament such as the member for Ferny Grove and Minister Lynham who spoke so passionately today from personal experience.

We need men to step up and lead the way in our homes and communities to show what is acceptable behaviour. After all, it is about the choices we make and this is a change in our culture that is required for future generations. The continued violence has to be addressed. Steps are being taken by our responsible government to educate students in schools and make tougher laws in relation to domestic violence breaches in the hope of reducing the incidence of such horrific violence that is so prevalent in our communities throughout Queensland. I commend this motion to the House.