




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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**CRIMINAL LAW (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) AMENDMENT BILL; CORONERS
(DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE DEATH REVIEW AND ADVISORY
BOARD) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.04 pm): I rise in support of the Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Bill and the Coroners (Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board) Amendment Bill. On 18 August 2015 the Premier released the government's response to the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence report, *Not now, not ever: putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*, accepting all 121 of the government recommendations and supporting the 19 non-government recommendations. The task force report tells a story that as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships makes me particularly concerned.

A Draft Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy, which is the vehicle to drive change across all sectors of the Queensland community, has also been released for community consultation. I encourage all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to provide feedback and contribute to this important strategy. Indigenous Queenslanders experience disproportionately high levels of violence, including domestic and family violence. In some communities violence and abuse is so prevalent it has become normalised to the extent that people who live there regard it as inevitable. The tragic result is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 35 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be hospitalised for spousal or domestic partner assaults.

The report also noted that the impacts of violence and abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities cannot be underestimated, contributing to negative effects on psychological and physical health, homelessness, poverty, children's wellbeing and education. This violence and abuse must stop, and it must stop now. It is incumbent on every one of us to take a stand against violence. Together with the Premier, my ministerial colleagues and each of you as members of parliament, I am committed to working with the Queensland community to champion change.

On 24 July this year I chaired the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men's Leaders Round Table in Cairns, with participants from across the state taking up the challenge to end the violence and abuse. At this round table participants agreed to make a pledge as men not to tolerate violence in any form, to call out relations and friends who commit any form of violence and to collectively apologise to and support victims of family violence. This is a very powerful statement and is the kind of commitment we need across the state to bring about a shift in attitude towards domestic and family violence. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships will continue to take up this challenge as we work with relevant agencies and all stakeholders to implement the government's response.

In my electorate of Mulgrave we have completed work on the new Yarrabah women's shelter—finally! For me this was a priority back in 2011 when I was previously the minister for Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander partnerships and committed \$800,000 to constructing this essential piece of infrastructure to help keep women in Yarrabah safe. Construction was scheduled for completion at the end of 2012, but unfortunately there was an election in 2012 and the LNP had not delivered by this time as we had committed way back in the previous term. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Housing and Public Works, Leanne Enoch, for her absolute understanding of this important facility. In fact, last week she visited my electorate to inspect the shelter in Yarrabah and was able to see firsthand the kind of environment and services that will be offered to women and children in need. This five-bed shelter will provide temporary supported accommodation and support for women and children escaping domestic and family violence. It will be operated by the Yarrabah Aboriginal Corporation for Women and I know that it will be an invaluable part of this community and my electorate.

I must also commend the practical grassroots initiatives like the annual football game being held between the Yarrabah Seahawks and the Mossman-Port Douglas Sharks to create awareness of Domestic Violence Month by wearing pink jerseys on the field. We all know that sport, especially local Rugby League clubs, can have an enormous influence on their communities, and in North Queensland local teams have been showing leadership on many of the issues facing the communities they are from. The Normanton Stingers come to mind with their anti-domestic violence campaign 'Domestic violence—it's not our game' back in 2010. That campaign was adopted by 14 Rugby League teams in New South Wales and two in New Zealand as well as an Aussie Rules team in Victoria. It is a great example of how strong teams with strong messages can have a wideranging influence within and beyond their communities.

The kind of cultural and cognitive change we are striving to achieve in this fight against domestic violence starts at home, so these initiatives matter and they do make a difference. That is why the Palaszczuk government is leading and supporting the implementation of a number of recommendations, including amending the Family Responsibilities Commission Act to include the requirement for a court to notify the FRC when a protection order under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act is made naming a welfare reform community resident as the respondent. I introduced this important legislation into the House this week. DATSIP is also working with agency partners to develop an integrated response to domestic and family violence in discrete Indigenous communities, including a trial of integrated service provision and support development of a local authority model to respond to crime and violence.

Other critical reforms include these bills that are now before the House, as introduced by the honourable Attorney-General. It is critical that we commit to protecting victims of domestic and family violence and, importantly, we must increase the accountability of perpetrators of domestic and family violence.

The Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Bill 2015 achieves that objective by increasing the maximum penalties for breaches of domestic violence orders under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012, enabling charges for criminal offences to indicate that they occurred in a domestic violence context, providing that convictions for domestic violence offences be noted on a person's criminal history and amending the Evidence Act 1977 to ensure that the availability of protection for special witnesses applies to all victims of domestic violence. These are vital changes that will ensure that those who perpetrate violence are held to account for that violence and that victims are better protected.

Through the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board, we will have an independent body that is able to review at a systemic level domestic and family violence related deaths. The Coroners (Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board) Amendment Bill 2015 will, among other reforms, ensure that the membership of the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board includes representatives of government and non-government entities with specialist experience, qualifications and expertise; empower the board to make recommendations for government and non-government entities; and enable the board to monitor the implementation of the recommendations. Having an independent body conducting systemic reviews will enable the identification of effective strategies to be put in place to prevent future deaths. Again, this is important work.

In Queensland over the past eight years nearly half of all homicides have been linked to domestic and family violence. From 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2013, 180 deaths occurred in the context of domestic and family violence. The number of deaths occurring in this context is increasing. As I noted previously, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are overrepresented in all of these statistics. But it is critical to remember that these statistics are not figures, but women who deserve to be safe, women who deserve to be secure. It is vital that we take steps now to address these issues.