




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGERTER

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FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algerter—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation) (4.26 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2015. Domestic and family violence is a serious issue affecting communities across our state—no matter their culture, geographic location or socio-economic status. However, it is a sad fact that for too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities the story of domestic and family violence is one that is far too familiar.

According to the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service, statistics indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are significantly more likely to experience domestic and family violence than non-Indigenous women and, furthermore, that Indigenous women are 35 times more likely to be hospitalised for assault and 10 times more likely to die from assault than non-Indigenous women. This is an issue that acts to destabilise and fragment communities, to disturb and disrupt social norms and impact families in a way that ripples across generations. In the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, domestic and family violence may occur in the context of complex kinship structures, creating a further layer of complexity—something that I am very familiar with and have a firsthand understanding of.

This bill will facilitate a prevention strategy that is sensitive to cultural complexities as it addresses domestic and family violence in the welfare reform program communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale, Mossman Gorge and Doomadgee. Specifically, the bill introduces a trigger for courts to notify the Family Responsibilities Commission when a protection order under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 is made naming a welfare reform community resident as the respondent.

In August this year the Palaszczuk government accepted all 121 recommendations from the Not now, not ever report. The domestic and family violence trigger proposed in this bill was recommendation 93 of that report. Once there has been a trigger, the FRC will have the option to conference that person and determine if, in the first instance, a referral should be made to a relevant support service to assist the person to address their behaviour. This is about putting structures in place to help rid our communities of domestic violence.

Unfortunately, like too many Aboriginal women, I witnessed domestic and family violence as a child. Watching women in my community suffer abuse at the hands of their partner was confusing to say the least. It is a roller-coaster, a cycle that plays over and over and after a while starts to feel like the norm. I remember promising myself as a child that I would never allow myself to be in an abusive relationship. However, I found myself in that exact position in my first serious adult relationship. Being physically assaulted by your partner is not just terrifying and confusing; it is something that can affect all other relationships in your life, including those important relationships with your community, your family, your country and yourself. I was lucky that I had my elders—elders from Minjerribah, Quandamooka elders—and my family, who intervened and helped me navigate the consequent

interactions with the police and the system more broadly and to also navigate the impact this whole situation had on my community and on my kinship structure with people from Quandamooka.

Our elders and community leaders have an important role to play in addressing domestic and family violence in our communities. The Family Responsibilities Commission consists of the commissioner, the deputy commissioner and 31 local commissioners—local commissioners who are respected elders and members of their communities. They have intimate knowledge of families, kinship structures and relationships in their communities and bring with them experience and knowledge that will guide a prevention approach that is aimed at addressing and preventing domestic and family violence.

Eliminating domestic violence is a key priority of this government. When governments, courts, community groups and community elders work together we can deliver a safer, more secure Queensland, and that is what these amendments to the Family Responsibilities Commission are all about. This bill is another way the Palaszczuk government are saying not now, not ever to domestic violence. I commend the bill to the House.