




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Domestic and Family Violence

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (11.43 am): I also rise today to contribute to the matters of public interest debate on domestic violence. Domestic violence as seen in the media in the recent week has made me sick to the core. If there has ever been a time when parliamentarians need to speak out about this insidious scourge on our communities, now is the time. This is beyond politics. All of us in this chamber should be joining arms to speak out, to commit, to communicate to our communities, our schools, our community groups—as far reaching as we can be, as far as the regions—about this terrible scourge, this insidious disease, that is throughout our communities.

I became a White Ribbon ambassador in 2008, when I entered the Australian Senate, and this morning I was so impressed to hear the Premier speak and also that every minister who rose to their feet today spoke on this issue. They spoke about their portfolios and the need to address this matter. I was pleased to hear the Attorney's announcement of fast-tracking legislation that would increase penalties and a range of other measures to eliminate this type of violence in our communities. There is no place for domestic violence anywhere in our country.

I would like to spend a couple of moments to explain to the chamber why I became a White Ribbon ambassador. The reason is twofold. Firstly, I was formerly an industrial officer and a union official. I was sick and tired of representing women regarding sexual harassment in the workplace perpetrated by males and predominantly by supervisors within their firms. That entrenched in my mind why we need to address this problem. The other reason I became a White Ribbon ambassador is that my daughter was the recipient of a perpetrator, being a boyfriend. It is the onset of simple things that demonstrate and lend itself to why we need to stand up regarding domestic violence. Telling my daughter what to wear, asking what is on her phone or what is in her SMS messages—this is the early onset of domestic violence in young people in our society. As a father, I had to protect her. I had to go out there and defend her. Eventually, through my involvement and through her understanding, she started to realise what was happening to her. Each and every one of us in this chamber has a mother, a wife, daughters and friends—females who need to be protected from this insidious disease. We need to stand up and condemn those people who are perpetrators who attack them.

Since becoming an ambassador I have held a variety of events. I have held events at Supercheap Auto, Queen Street Mall and Queensland Rail. I have held events with previous prime minister Kevin Rudd and also at the Australia Zoo because of my relationship with Terri Irwin. I have stood there in the Crocoseum and got blokes to rise to their feet and swear that they will not commit violence against women. Those events and those commitments continue. One of the first things I did when I entered this parliament was to email every male parliamentarian in this chamber and ask them to join me in this fight to become a White Ribbon ambassador. I know that on this side a number of people have gone through

the process. It is not an arduous task. It takes a little bit of time, but the commitment and the reward that we will deliver back in our communities is so essential.

One of the other things I am doing in my area on 21 November through the help of one of my staff, Ross—and just recently he came in on his day off to get this program up and running—is holding a community event to raise awareness about tackling this problem. I am clearly overwhelmed by the response from the community, the local businesses, the schools and the police who are prepared to come along on the 21st and take a stand and speak out in our communities about domestic violence. They are some of the reasons, as a White Ribbon ambassador, I am so committed to this cause. I was also impressed this morning to hear from the education minister about programs and initiatives they are going to consider introducing to our education system. This can be generational change. We can influence our children to make change throughout generations so that we eliminate this insidious disease.