




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (12.11 pm): I rise to speak to the Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Bill 2015 and the Coroners (Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board) Amendment Bill 2015. In recent weeks, like many of my colleagues and constituents, I was shocked to see violence and public incidents occur on the Gold Coast that, once again, drew attention to the scourge of domestic violence, which has become so prevalent in our society. These events were tragic and should not have happened. They shook the members of my local community, who were outraged by what they had seen, and rightfully expected to see their elected representatives take action to address this systemic problem. At the time I said that it was the responsibility of every individual in our community to help tackle this ongoing problem by ensuring that we not only punish offenders but also provide adequate support and legal assistance for victims.

I am pleased to see that the government has so far continued the work of the former LNP government in addressing domestic violence by implementing the recommendations of the special task force on domestic and family violence contained in the *Not now, not ever* report. This task force was created by the former LNP government whilst my very good friend the member for Aspley was the minister for communities, child safety and disability services. We knew that there was no excuse for domestic violence in Queensland and something had to be done.

When it comes to domestic and family violence, the LNP opposition has taken a bipartisan approach. We know that this issue is too important to let politics get in the way of real reform. The bills that we are debating today will implement a number of the task force recommendations to address some key issues related to domestic violence. The Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Bill will increase the maximum penalties for breaches of domestic violence orders, commonly known as DVOs, thereby cracking down on offenders. This legislation will increase the maximum penalty for breaching a DVO, a police protection notice or release condition from three years imprisonment to five years imprisonment.

In addition, the bill will enable charges for criminal offences to indicate that they occurred in a domestic violence context and provide that convictions for domestic violence offences be noted on a person's criminal history, making offenders' past crimes more easily accessible in the future. The bill will also ensure that the availability of protections for special witnesses apply to all victims of domestic violence, recognising that not wanting to report domestic violence is a common problem in addressing this issue.

Meanwhile, the Coroners (Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board) Amendment Bill will establish an independent Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and

Advisory Board consisting of multidisciplinary experts to identify common systemic failures, report to the oversight body every six months on its findings and be supported by the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Unit. With the task force noting the lack of a comprehensive death review structure to review the system as a whole, this is an important step towards reducing the number of deaths that occur as a result of domestic violence.

Although I, too, take a bipartisan approach to the government's implementation of the task force's recommendations, I remain deeply concerned that the Robina Community Legal Centre, which provides critical assistance to domestic and family violence victims in my electorate, remains unfunded. As I have said in this House in recent weeks, funding certainty for the Robina Community Legal Centre would mean that that centre could directly expand the free front-line service that it offers, increase its case load and ensure that it has the administrative and support staff to help those who approach the centre in times of need.

In recent weeks, amidst a six-figure funding announcement by the government for one of more than 13 community legal centres based in Brisbane, I was disappointed to see that the Gold Coast has missed out as no funding was announced for the Robina Community Legal Centre. That is despite the Robina Community Legal Centre being one of only two community legal centres available to help Gold Coast residents in times of need. Despite the impassioned pleas of my community and the recent tragic events on the Gold Coast, it remains to be seen whether the government will deliver funding certainty for a second community legal centre for this rapidly growing city.

As we embrace a bipartisan approach to tackling domestic violence, it is important that we not only work to enact improved legislative frameworks and appropriate punishments but also ensure that adequate legal assistance is available for victims of this insidious crime. With that in mind, I again call on the government to urgently ensure that the Robina Community Legal Centre receives the funding that it needs to care for the most vulnerable in our community.