




Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

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**DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION AND ANOTHER ACT  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (7.58 pm): I rise in the chamber to contribute to the debate on the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Another Act Amendment Bill 2015. I would like to begin by saying that domestic violence is a blight and a scourge on society. It is a very serious and complex issue which faces all of our respective communities. It is indeed an issue which is well overdue in being addressed and discussed openly. It continues to be a topic which even today some people in society do not like to publicly discuss. This needs to end now.

For far too long we saw domestic violence kept behind closed doors. I know as a child growing up in the sixties and seventies you would rarely have considered checking to see if your neighbours were okay if you heard a fight taking place. It was something that happened far too often but, as a society, we often chose to ignore it.

We in this august chamber have been elected as spokespersons and the voice of our local communities within the Queensland parliament. Accordingly, we have been entrusted to represent the beliefs of our constituents and ensure that we enact legislation which will deliver positive and progressive changes to society. I am proud to wholeheartedly support the bipartisan approach of this Queensland parliament to address the abhorrent nature of domestic violence. As my colleagues in the House would be aware, last week, Wednesday, 25 November, was White Ribbon Day. This day is an annual reminder for men and women alike that domestic violence is never, ever okay. I passionately support this organisation, as not only does it provide support to victims, but it offers education and guidance to perpetrators.

As a strong advocate against domestic violence I took the opportunity to address the Carindale and Eastern Suburbs Community Forum which was, coincidentally, also held on Wednesday of last week. I asked the men in the room what the leading cause of death and injury was in women under 45. Many responded with what you would think are typical responses such as cancer or suicide as a result of depression. When I mentioned it was domestic violence, there was complete and utter silence in the room. I encouraged each of them to take the pledge to not commit domestic violence and, importantly, to start the conversation if they believe their friends are mistreating their partners, whether male or female. I took the pledge myself here in Parliament House on Tuesday with several members from both sides of the chamber.

In addition, last week I also had the opportunity to meet with the director of the Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services, Mr James Farrell, and president of the Bayside Community Legal Service, Mr Michael Stubbins, where it was brought to my attention that almost one third of all cases seen by the bayside centre were family law related including, sadly, a high number of domestic violence matters. I asked whether they thought there was an increase in domestic violence, to which I was told that more people are becoming aware of the options available to them and therefore more people are reporting these incidents.

This gave me pause to think and look back at the statistics available for my own electorate of Chatsworth. My wonderful seat in the eastern suburbs of Brisbane falls within two police divisions: Carina and Capalaba. In 2015, the current year, up to the end of September there were 50 breaches of domestic violence protection orders in Carina and 94 in Capalaba. For the same period last year in 2014 there were 29 in Carina and 24 in Capalaba. Tragically, that is an increase in breaches of domestic violence protection orders of 72 per cent and roughly 11 per cent respectively. These figures alarm me and reinforce my belief that more needs to be done to protect our most vulnerable. The Bayside Community Legal Centre and its staff, which services my electorate almost in its entirety, are volunteer barristers and solicitors. This year they have already received approximately 50 phone calls from victims of domestic and family violence and have 10 open cases of the same nature.

The LNP, like the Labor Party, are serious about cracking down on domestic violence, which is why in 2014 we initiated a special task force led by Dame Quentin Bryce. This task force, as all members know, resulted in the *Not now, not ever: putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland* report which was handed down this year. We set out to make a positive and directional change in this area, with a vision to stop once and for all domestic violence in this state. This report is now the responsibility of the current state government, and I commend them for accepting all of the 121 recommendations.

Further to this, I welcome and commend the suite of reforms they are introducing to tackle this problem. It is rare, admittedly, that you will hear me commend the current government, but some issues transcend partisan politics and this is an issue of basic human rights; the right to be free from domestic violence and to pursue your dreams and aspirations without the need to keep looking over your shoulder. In October of this year the LNP provided bipartisan support to increase the severity of breaching a protection order—something which is most evidently needed. The bill before the House today is an example of members from both sides of the chamber coming together in a bipartisan way in order to improve Queensland society. Sadly, due to the adversarial and robust nature of debate in this place, most of our constituents only see the chamber in full flight on the nightly news. I sincerely wish that all of our constituents could see what is taking place here right now in the spirit of genuine bipartisan support for this important legislation. We may come from a different ideological and philosophical perspective in our quest to improve Queensland, but no political party has a mortgage on the human spirit and condition.

I note that the bill aims to implement three specific changes to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 and an amendment to part 6 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. These include requiring a court to hear proceedings on cross-applications together. Where two people seek protection orders against each other, it is then up to the courts to determine which person is in most need of protection. The bill will also see increased protections for victims of domestic and family violence by requiring the court to consider imposing a condition excluding a perpetrator of domestic violence from the family home, which is known as an ouster condition. Whilst this condition is currently available for the Courts to apply, it is not mandatory for them to consider it—often resulting in under-utilisation. A third amendment will see victim impact statements introduced into the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act for mandatory consideration in civil applications for protection orders. This will result in the courts hearing directly from victims about the impact of violence. Finally, the use of body worn cameras by police officers will be included in the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act so to remove any doubt about their legality.

I will never know how difficult it must have been for people to come forward and share their stories with the task force. I was blessed to have a father who detested violence against women, and he and my mother provided me and my two siblings with an harmonious childhood upbringing. It would, however, be a grave insult to the bravery of those people who overcame their inner demons to come forward and speak out, and we owe it to them and the numerous people before them to mean it when we say, 'Not now, not ever.'

In concluding my contribution supporting this bill, it would be remiss of me not to place on the public record my sincere admiration and thanks to the domestic violence task force, and I pay tribute to the former member for Greenslopes, Ian Kaye; the former member for Woodridge, Desley Scott; the former member for Gladstone, Liz Cunningham; and the former member for Sandgate, Kerry Millard, who is present in this chamber tonight. Each of these past members, along with the current task force members and the minister, have my deepest respect and gratitude with regard to this bill. I am proud to support this landmark legislation. For all of the tumult that has occurred in this chamber this year, I believe this is when we have come together in one of our finest moments.