




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 15 September 2015

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Domestic and Family Violence

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (9.46 am): I want to add to the Premier's contribution about the terrible way that domestic and family violence has been thrust into the public eye in recent weeks. This is traditionally a violence that has been hidden from public view. Domestic violence happens behind closed doors—that is what makes it so insidious and so harmful, and maybe that is why it has been so easy for our society to ignore its dreadful and sometimes deadly consequences. But last week this terrible violence spilled out onto the streets of Queensland, reminding us all that we need to act now to curb this evil.

Well, the Palaszczuk government is taking action. Indeed, we had already started. In July we announced a trial of Queensland's first dedicated domestic violence court, with its own dedicated magistrate, at Southport. This was in direct response to the high demand for domestic violence services in Southport, where in the last financial year there were 2,681 DVO applications, accounting for just over 10 per cent of applications statewide. The Southport trial started on 1 September.

We have allocated \$1.1 million for the domestic violence duty lawyer trial across 14 locations statewide. More than that, we announced funding of \$2.1 million to establish an independent Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Board so we can learn from failings and stop them from happening again. As announced by the Premier yesterday, implementation of this review board will be progressed this week.

Our approach has been to bring people together and to work with the legal profession and the judiciary. I chaired a roundtable meeting on domestic and family violence with leaders of the legal community on 18 June. This was an important opportunity to come together with practitioners and judicial officers who are regularly faced with the reality of domestic violence matters in court. At that round table, the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association of Queensland outlined their initiatives to assist members of the profession in recognising and appropriately responding to issues of domestic violence for their clients. I thank them for their ongoing work.

Additionally, I want to thank the Chief Magistrate and his colleagues for implementing the Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book. As one of the recommendations of the *Not now, not ever* report, the new bench book provides magistrates with a clear judicial and procedural framework for dealing with domestic and family violence matters so they can deliver a high level of consistency in how the law is applied statewide. This is in addition to other procedural and administrative reforms that are being adopted across jurisdictions.

Another example discussed during this round table was an initiative between the Magistrate's Court and the Family Court to facilitate fast referrals where there are domestic violence matters that may also involve family law issues. This makes it easier for survivors to progress their case, cut down

on time frames and give them priority assistance. These processes are already being implemented. These are day-to-day processes in our courts that can have a real impact on how these cases proceed in court and on how individuals experience the justice system.

Our work is not done and, as announced yesterday, we will be proceeding with a range of legislative reforms to deter people from breaches of domestic violence orders, protect witnesses in court and better record domestic violence criminal history to empower courts to see patterns of escalating violence and to intervene before it is too late. I look forward to working with all members to continue this important work.