




Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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**DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.45 pm): I rise today to speak to and support the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2016. At the very heart of this bill is an intent to ensure the safety of domestic violence victims and their children—our Queensland families. Our work is to further shine a light on this scourge often hidden within our society. The Palaszczuk government and the opposition are not afraid to tackle this incredibly hard and challenging topic that affects so many. This bill will enhance information sharing and support tailored responses to domestic and family violence and better prioritise victim safety whilst holding the perpetrators of violence more accountable.

The amendments will build on recent reforms made as a result of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland and its final report, *Not now, not ever: putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*. I have spoken several times in this House about my time as a paramedic having to attend scenes of domestic violence. They are harrowing. As Minister Miles said earlier, when there is a death as a result of domestic violence, those scenes stay with you for a long time. There are a couple of scenes in Townsville that will never leave my memory: a lady stabbed 47 times who bled out in front of me and another lady who was kicked so badly I could not recognise her. I did not know if she was alive. Bravely, she survived her significant head injuries. They are the kinds of things that do happen. I commend our government for taking the brave step to stop it. I clearly remember the chaos of those scenes and occasionally the very real danger of violence that was still posed to the victims and their children.

In my electorate of Thuringowa I meet regularly with the officer in charge of Kirwan Police Station. It is down the road from my office. At the last meeting he shared with me that they were responding to over 1,200 domestic violence incidents in the Thuringowa area a year. That is over 100 a month, meaning, on average, officers from that station are turning out three to four times a day on domestic violence related incidents. On Monday the *Townsville Bulletin* reported that the annual police statistical data revealed that more than 2,000 domestic violence orders were issued last financial year in the Townsville district. This included 2,705 breaches of DVOs, with 992 men and 198 women committing domestic violence offences across the 12 months. I commend the *Townsville Bulletin* for continuing to inform the people of the scourge of domestic violence in our local community. I am sure most constituents in my electorate would be shocked by those numbers. We all have a role to play in reducing the shocking numbers of domestic violence incidents in our community and the need to reduce the cycle of domestic violence as children may see this as normal behaviour. We have considerable work to do in this space. I believe this bill will achieve this.

An important part of strengthening the bill is the enhancing of the police protection notices which allows for children to be included in police protection notices and other temporary orders. It is a significant step in ensuring that our children are protected and recognised as the link between domestic

violence and child safety. Amendments also require police to consider additional conditions in PPNs, including considering the exclusion of perpetrators from their homes and barring perpetrators from contacting their victims or children before trial. There are a number of amendments and good things happening within this bill. Today I heard members of the House share their stories. I listened to the Attorney-General talk about how brave it is to stand up and talk about incidents that have been experienced. I believe that shared life experiences are powerful. I commend the member for Gaven for standing up and saying what he did and I commend the member for Mudgeeraba. It is ironic that the three of us have been on the health committee. I am one of those people, as I have intimated to the member for Mudgeeraba.

I do not know whether I could do what the member for Gaven has done so bravely, which is to stand up and talk about personal experience, but it briefly goes something like this: domestic violence pulled my family apart. I have not seen my mother for 30-something years and my siblings for about the same period. Now I know why I did so badly in school. I went from city to city, town to town and house to house. I moved through as the violence and the stuff around me took place. I do not want to go into detail, because sometimes I think that is all too hard. However, I commend fellow members for standing up and sharing their experiences in this House.

I thank the minister for her courageous work in this space. The minister's department of communities and the staff—I see some staff sitting out the back—are collectively changing and saving lives. Our government should be rightly proud of the achievements in this space. I commend the bill to the House.