




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (5.11 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, now before the Queensland parliament. This bill addresses recommendations of the report *Not now, not ever: putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*, released on 28 February 2015, by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence. This task force was established by the former LNP government and commenced a much needed public dialogue and reform process with respect to domestic violence.

The Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 will ensure that our police are permitted to act more quickly to protect women and children fleeing domestic violence. This bill will simplify the police and law enforcement processes and procedures and allow police to provide immediate and enhanced protection in such situations. It will also allow our court system to issue domestic violence orders for longer periods and to consider modifying any existing Family Court orders to better protect children.

Statistics provided by DVConnect are alarming. In the past 12 months DVConnect received approximately 55,000 calls relating to domestic violence, family violence and sexual assault. They continue to receive some 4,000 calls per month from women who are in fear of or facing an immediate threat of personal danger from domestic and family violence.

One significant change under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is the establishment of a comprehensive information-sharing framework to ensure that agencies providing specialist domestic and family violence services and their associated prescribed entities can share information appropriately with each other to assess and manage risk. Sadly, domestic violence is usually an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling through fear. Every year Queenslanders die from domestic and family violence, sometimes when there has been no prior history of physical violence. This is exactly why all forms of violence and controlling and obsessive behaviours must be taken seriously.

All of us need to recognise the signs of domestic and family violence. If a friend or family member stops seeing friends and family and becomes isolated or becomes depressed or loses confidence or tries to hide bruises or gives unlikely explanations for injuries, these can be danger signs. This is far from an easy subject, and the initial discussion can be very difficult as the at-risk individual may be very defensive. As a doctor I know how difficult and confronting these conversations can be for all involved. One should only ever start such a conversation when the person is alone and in a safe place and when there is time to discuss such an issue. The at-risk person needs to feel safe and to also trust you. You

can help make a difference and may be the catalyst for them feeling stronger and much more capable in seeking options to help them in their current situation, ensuring they understand that they do not deserve being abused, that it is not their fault and that help is just around the corner.

Legal and support services are both ready and available for all forms of domestic and family violence in Queensland, and these services can assist people to consider their options and assist with ways to keep them safe. This then brings us back to the importance of having legislation in place that actually supports our police and justice system. One of the important recommendations of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence was for a review of current legislation to guarantee such legislation provides a cohesive public policy framework that incorporates the reforms recommended by the task force. The task force identified specific issues, including the current provisions and operation of police protection notices and the application of provisions relating to voluntary intervention orders.

The Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 will establish an interim information-sharing system that will provide police and our courts with information on all domestic violence orders that have been issued. Also, it will expand the protection which is currently provided by police protection notices. Police will now be able to direct a person to either remain at a specified place or go to another place and/or be able to either issue or serve a police protection notice.

I continue to be pleased that the Palaszczuk Labor government accepted the findings of the LNP initiated report by the then Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence so soon after the 2015 state election. Today, in a spirit of bipartisanship, I offer my support for the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, given the further public policy objectives that need to be achieved on this very important issue in Queensland. I am also supportive of the amendment that was to be moved by the shadow minister, the member for Mudgeeraba, Ms Ros Bates MP, particularly with respect to requiring the court to give written reasons when it makes a protection order for less than the stated five years, but I am of the understanding that the Labor government has accepted that recommendation.

I conclude by acknowledging the member for Gaven for his courageous outlining of his own personal experiences in relation to this important topic and for having the bravery to outline that to the House today. I certainly acknowledge his contribution.

As the father of four children—two sons and two daughters—I hope that into the future, once and for all, we can work collaboratively together to ensure the next generation is able to reduce the prevalence of this, not only in our community in the south-east corner and in my electorate of Moggill but also right across Queensland and Australia. These incidents should not take place. One thing that concerns me greatly, as we have seen recently in the public domain, is the increasing prevalence of sexting and the use of other technologies which are potentially detrimental to both developing young girls and developing young boys and some of the disrespect and lack of respectful activities that take place in those forums and what that can then lead to down the track when these young people head into adulthood.

Finally, I take this opportunity to condemn the antisocial actions of those in our community who are terrorising children and others as a twisted form of entertainment. Actions aimed at generating fear and violence in any form should be repudiated by all of us as parliamentarians. Whilst this is not directly related to the long title of the bill, I join with both LNP and Labor members in condemning the actions of those dressing in sinister clown outfits with the aim of instilling fear and terror in many members of our community. All children should be able to have a childhood free of fear, whether that be in the broader community, attending school or living in their own homes. I commend the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 to the House.