




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (4.41 pm): Violence and abuse is never acceptable. Abuse can come with physical threat. It can come with other over-the-top controlling behaviours which diminish people in the choices that they have over their lives. Tragically, it can have fatal consequences and life-altering negative consequences—damage to people generationally. I support the Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, which, among many of the amendments, allows for better sharing of information between government and/or non-government agencies who are involved in providing protection and support.

Shadow minister Ros Bates recently visited the Sunshine Coast, and I thank the shadow minister for that visit. Together we met with a number of agencies once again to reaffirm our support for those who work on the front line of what can be a very difficult and heart-wrenching area but also to hear stories about how they are able to help people get on with their lives, to rebuild after unexpectedly tragic events. We met with a number of local agencies on the Sunshine Coast and, in particular, at Maroochydore. One of the issues that was highlighted was the need to have better sharing of information between agencies such as the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health and the department of child safety where there was a risk of harm related to domestic and family violence. This bill will allow better information sharing to occur between specialist services in order to assess possible risk of harm and to keep people safe.

We have acknowledged a number of people in this area who have championed the need for change. Of course in 2015 it was Australian of the Year Rosie Batty who made it a very high-profile and necessary campaign to push for more to be done to provide victims with immediate and effective protection from the domestic and family violence culture following the tragic death of her son, Luke. Unfortunately, there are so many who, like Rosie, have experienced these very life-altering and tragic events.

Better and greater collaboration between agencies was highlighted during the coronial inquest into Luke Batty's death, and it has been raised in regard to a number of Queensland incidents as well. Victims must be better protected and supported. Police and courts must be given better tools to help keep victims safe, and perpetrators of domestic violence must be held more accountable.

I support this bill as it expands the protection that can be provided by police protection notices, PPNs. It introduces new information-sharing provisions and enables the Queensland Police Service to make referrals to specialist DFV service providers where a serious threat is identified. Police are often the first to respond in a domestic and family violence situation and they need to be given support and adequate tools where a serious threat is identified.

This bill gives police more flexibility to issue a PPN and streamlines the administrative processes to allow police to provide victims with protection immediately and without delays. The bill also provides greater clarification for courts regarding DVOs, or domestic violence orders, when a victim has been threatened or fears for their safety or wellbeing and requires courts to focus on the protection required by the victim in determining the appropriate duration of a protection order, a PO.

I note the support of the Women's Legal Service Queensland and the Community Legal Centres Queensland for a requirement that courts must be given written reasons for choosing to make an order that is less than five years and their support for the opposition's move, through shadow minister Ros Bates, for an amendment to the legislation to address this.

I support the bill's objective to hold perpetrators of violence more accountable and to encourage them to change their behaviour. Recent figures released for the Sunshine Coast show a shocking increase in DVO breaches. This is clearly unacceptable, and we need to ensure that police are given the resources, as I have said, to address this trend. The annual statistical review for 2015-16 reported up to more than a 40 per cent increase. It is important that we increase the maximum penalty for breaches of PPNs and ensure there is greater consistency with penalties imposed for breaching DVOs to hold perpetrators more accountable for their actions.

The Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 builds on the legislative reforms that have already passed through the House as a result of the LNP government establishing the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland in 2014. This task force, chaired by Dame Quentin Bryce, released its final report *Not now, not ever: putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland* in February 2015, with 140 recommendations that were put forward to set a new direction for a strategy to stop domestic and family violence in Queensland, including a full review of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012.

We would like to think that laws could stop all tragedies. Unfortunately, as we know, this is an area that is going to require continued vigilance and continued monitoring of how effective the legal changes are to ensure that, wherever possible, every action is taken to keep people safe, to change a culture that too often is passed from one generation to another where the victims in some circumstances can themselves become those who offend against another generation. It does not always seem to make sense, but, unfortunately, with the damage that is done intergenerationally it is a cycle that takes more than just laws to break, but laws are important. Laws are part of that tool kit to ensure that the agencies who are responding are better equipped to be able to do so effectively.

Ultimately, changing the culture is about bringing it out of the shadows and talking about how better to address not only the culture of violence but also the culture of abuse and manipulation and whatever abusive techniques take place that ultimately control the lives of others in such a damaging way. I support the bill before the House.