




Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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### **CRIMINAL LAW (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE) AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (5.15 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2015. This bill is the latest example of the legacy of the former LNP government coming to fruition in legislation passed in this current parliament. Through this bill, which seeks to introduce policies recommended by the *Not now, not ever* task force, commissioned by the LNP, we will see the scales of justice weighted towards victims in domestic violence cases. Importantly, these reforms will ensure appropriate penalties and mechanisms exist in our judicial system to stamp out domestic violence in our communities.

This bill will amend the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992 to make provisions for domestic and family violence to be an aggravating factor on a sentence whilst amending the Criminal Code to create an offence of choking, suffocation or strangulation in a domestic setting. It will also amend legislation to allow a court to receive a submission from a party on what they consider to be the appropriate sentence or sentence range for the court to impose, taking into greater consideration the needs and the perspectives of the victims in domestic violence cases.

At the outset I thank my good friend Tracy Davis, the member for Aspley, for the outstanding work she did as the minister for communities, child safety and disability services and for the work she continues to do as the shadow minister to get the *Not now, not ever* task force underway and ensure we take concrete, tangible steps to address the scourge of domestic violence in Queensland.

As a survivor of domestic violence I am pleased to see these recommendations being implemented in the 55th Parliament as a direct result of the member for Aspley's commitment. In Mudgeeraba these steps to reduce domestic violence are sorely needed. In fact, Mudgeeraba has seen an increase of 96 per cent in reported incidents of domestic violence in the light of recent media attention, with more residents coming forward and telling police about their situation in the hope it can finally be addressed. Unfortunately, due to inadequate staffing arrangements, I am told that the Mudgeeraba Police Station is now about 10 officers down and is being absolutely swamped by domestic violence reports.

The Robina Community Legal Centre remains unfunded, despite providing free front-line legal advice to domestic violence victims on the southern Gold Coast. For two years the Robina CLC has delivered free front-line legal and referral services as an all-volunteer, unfunded community legal centre. I regularly speak with the president of the Robina CLC and have visited the centre on a number of occasions, including alongside my colleague the shadow Attorney-General, Ian Walker, and I greatly admire the good work they do to assist those in need who may be struggling with a domestic violence situation but simply do not have the resources to get legal advice. In total I am told that, on average, between 40 and 50 per cent of the Robina CLC's case load is related to family and domestic violence cases on the southern Gold Coast. Whether it is our boys in blue at the Mudgeeraba Police Station or

the hardworking volunteer lawyers at the Robina Community Legal Centre, who give up their time to help those in need, funding our community needs to deal with the scourge of domestic violence is still of paramount importance.

Late last year I made a speech on domestic violence. It was a speech through my eyes as a seven-year-old child. It was with great trepidation that I gave that speech, but I felt strongly enough that it was time to speak out. Many thousands of Australians saw that speech as it was picked up by the mummy blog Mamamia and went viral. The number of women who rang my office, wrote to me or facebooked me was astounding. A number of women said that my speech gave them the courage to leave and to take their children from circumstances similar to what my sisters and I endured.

Whilst many were shocked by my speech and praised my sisters and me for our courage, it was a watered down version of the events which occurred to all of us on a weekly basis. There are too many stories to put on paper and too many memories that haunt me and my sisters to this day. I said then that my greatest concern was that when the media died down and all of the speeches were over in this House, in many homes when the front door closed many women behind those doors would be forgotten as we go home to our own safe homes. I still believe that many are still suffering in silence and still suffering in fear and, whilst more women are coming forward, there are still those who feel there is no escape and nowhere to run. I have had the privilege as a member of parliament to have recently been involved in the urgent removal of two women who were in incredibly high-risk situations in my electorate. I thank my local police for their swift action and it would be remiss of me to not acknowledge the Labor ministers who worked very quickly to assist in rescuing these women out of imminent and immediate harm, and I thank them. I, like everyone in this House, have a responsibility to keep this issue front and centre and never forget that for all of those women we save there are still women behind closed doors, terrified and in danger. I join with all of my colleagues in this House to support the passage of this legislation.