




Speech By
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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (9.32 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Industrial Relations Bill 2016. This bill is yet another attempt by the Labor government to adhere to the will of its union bosses. This time, we have a government that is trying to support union thugs stepping into workplaces—bullying their way in—and is giving more power to unions bosses to stop union movement numbers declining at a rapid rate. This is a shameless attempt by this government to throw out the current Industrial Relations Act 1999 and replace it with an agenda that has been rubberstamped by its union mates.

Although the opposition will oppose this bill, as the shadow minister for the prevention of domestic and family violence I have discovered a significant provision in this bill, which was buried on page 83. This bill provides for domestic and family violence leave, which is a significant reform in the domestic and family violence portfolio. Rather than allowing for this reform to be debated and considered as part of a domestic violence bill, the government has quietly buried this provision among its pro-union agenda in the Industrial Relations Bill. It is mind-boggling that this government would bury this domestic and family violence reform in legislation that is designed to appease its union mates rather than it being introduced alongside other domestic violence reforms.

Important questions must be asked. Why was domestic and family violence reform not introduced by the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence? Is this minister no longer trusted to handle her own portfolio? This comes as no surprise, because this government has consistently dropped the ball on domestic and family violence under an embattled minister. As I have said before in the House, under this government, domestic and family violence services are completely underresourced under a minister who was caught off guard by a spike in domestic and family violence reports. In a year where we have had a record number of reports of domestic and family violence, where victims are finally getting the courage to leave their abusive homes, we have a minister who is too busy bumbling and fumbling from one crisis to the next to provide the necessary support for victims. As a result, we have domestic and family violence services on the front line that rely on government support to provide support and accommodation, often in emergency circumstances, absolutely stretched to the limit.

The figures speak for themselves—and they are the government's own figures. In a single year, around 9,000 nights of motel accommodation are provided to 9,000 women and, worse than that, more than 13,000 children fleeing domestic and family violence. This was a 240 per cent increase in demand in 12 months and the cost was more than \$1 million—\$1 million that could have about spent on vital domestic and family violence services, but instead was spent on putting up women and children in motels rather than shelters. This is a massive spike, but it was not unexpected, particularly given the heightened profile of domestic and family violence in this parliament, in the media and in the community.

Apparently, this issue has caught the minister completely unaware, with no idea and no plan to rectify the situation and provide domestic violence organisations with the funds that they need to provide assistance to vulnerable women and children. This is happening across the state. As I travel to regional

areas—to Cairns, to Townsville, to the Sunshine Coast—the story is always the same. That story is that organisations established to help victims are underresourced. These services are absolutely swamped by calls from people escaping dangerous situations and who are needing help right now, today. DVConnect has felt the brunt of this spike in domestic violence awareness, with the service fielding more than 4,000 calls a month—double the number it used to receive—as police respond to increased call-outs to domestic violence incidents.

It is crucial that, when a victim makes the tough decision to leave a violent situation, the support and services are there for them so that they feel they have somewhere to turn. Under this government and under this minister, that confidence is simply not there. This minister was charged with delivering and implementing the recommendations of the *Not now, not ever* report. This minister was charged with delivering a whole-of-government response to the issue of domestic and family violence. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that this minister has been sidelined in legislating domestic and family violence leave. The question now remains: why is she still the minister?