




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 11 October 2016

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

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (5.29 pm): It is my pleasure to rise to give support to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 and recognise the contribution of all members across this chamber and the very emotional and touching stories that we have heard, particularly today from the member for Gaven and his reflections on his personal experience. We talk about a lot of things that we are passionate about in this chamber, but when members start talking about their own personal experiences or those of members of their family we really feel exposed. It is a very courageous thing to do in this chamber. I congratulate the member for Gaven for telling his story, as have other members told of their story or that of family members in this chamber, because every time they do that they potentially send a message to someone else that it is okay to speak up. When we talk about cultural change, one thing that I particularly have noticed in my electorate is the people who are coming forward to me—people whom I have known for years—saying, 'I am a victim,' that they are still going through the system and that they now feel like they can tell others. That is a good thing. After hearing the personal stories from this chamber, if one more person feels confident enough to come forward, that is a very positive message that we are sending from this parliament.

I will not go through all the elements of this bill, because many members have done so. It is an important bill. It is one of many bills that this parliament has already considered and will consider into the future in implementing all of the *Not now, not ever* recommendations. A number of members have talked about resources and have asked the government to respond to queries about resources, particularly in the justice system. I note the statement of reservation by the opposition members on the parliamentary committee. I want to touch on some of those issues and answer those queries in terms of the areas that fall specifically within my portfolio responsibility.

A number of members talked about the Palaszczuk government's 2016-17 state budget, which included a range of funding measures and brings the government's total overall investment in tackling domestic and family violence to almost \$200 million over five years. I can say that significant resources are being dedicated to tackling domestic and family violence through the justice system. Those resources include funding of \$1.1 million to deliver the domestic violence duty lawyer scheme to 13 locations across the state in addition to the specialist domestic and family violence court at Southport. This crucial service provides free legal information and advice to applicants and respondents in domestic and family violence matters and also assists people to complete court forms and documents.

I want to emphasise that this funding goes to having duty lawyers representing both sides. I have sat in closed courts where the victim has been both male and female and the alleged perpetrators have been both male and female. It is really important that we have legal assistance for both sides, particularly when a DVO is being installed by the court, so that the perpetrator understands the terms of that DVO, what is required of them and what the consequences are of a breach of that DVO. If the

perpetrator is simply consenting because they think that that is the quickest way to get out of that court and that it assists them in family law matters, as I hear regularly, then they do not understand the consequences of their actions when they breach that order and they do not understand what is required of them. When we talk about increasing penalties, the consequences of DVOs and the consequences of breaches of DVOs, it is very important that the perpetrators have that fully explained to them.

There have been significant resources put into the Southport court, including physical infrastructure. It is very hard to fully plan for the needs of our courts into the future, because we are still seeing growth in this area. We know that there is a lot of pressure on our court facilities. As we committed to do, we are going through an audit process of all of our courts. We are fortunate that the Southport court is a bigger, more modern court that we can retrofit. However, some of the smaller, older courthouses in the regions are heritage protected and it is very difficult to retrofit them. We are committed to looking at how we can make sure that there are the secure, safe rooms and private interview rooms that are needed in courthouses.

We are putting more funding into Legal Aid, bringing it up to the national average over the next four years. Importantly, we have committed \$20 million over the next 10 years—the biggest investment in the courts that we have seen for decades. That funding assists in alleviating those pressures that we are talking about. There is also additional funding for the Women’s Legal Service helpline and additional funding for the development and delivery of professional training. I can certainly say to those members opposite—and those on this side as well—that significant resources and funding has been committed in this budget and in the forward estimates to address those resource issues to ensure that we have everything possible to meet our obligations under the *Not now, not ever* report. I commend the bill to the House.