




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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CORRECTIVE SERVICES (PAROLE BOARD) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.01 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Corrective Services (Parole Board) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. We on this side of the House know we have to keep victims safe when it comes to offenders being released on parole. This is especially the case when it comes to offenders who have been convicted of crimes related to domestic violence. That is why earlier this year we successfully passed parole reforms to tell domestic violence victims about the potential parole and release of their perpetrators. This was historic legislation that will help keep victims of domestic violence safe and reduce the risk of reoffending.

Of course, the LNP's commitment to balancing the scales of justice does not stop there. We will be introducing amendments to this bill to further amend parole laws and implement our no-body no-parole policy because we must rebalance the scales of justice in favour of victims trying to find closure in the tragic circumstances of losing a loved one. Our laws will apply to those convicted of murder and manslaughter where the body is not located, but of course these changes are not just supported by the LNP.

In February 2017 the Sofronoff review recommended these changes for Queensland but, in typical Labor style, we have seen these recommendations sitting on ministers' desks since that time with no action taken to implement these recommendations. Why has this government failed to act? It is because Labor is soft on crime. It knows that an independent review recommended this important reform, but it is so ideologically conflicted by its preference for leniency that it has chosen to sit idly by and do nothing about it. Our policy will bring us into line with all other states actively considering no-body no-parole laws including Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales because while Labor dithers, the LNP delivers. Under an LNP government, Queenslanders and victims of domestic violence will be safer. We will improve community safety by reducing crime and, importantly, unlike those opposite, we will support victims of crime.

As we consider legislation which complements our earlier laws protecting victims of domestic and family violence, we should also remember that this month is Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month. This is a very important initiative which aims to raise awareness in communities across this state about the importance of stamping out domestic and family violence in all its forms. This of course is an issue which is very near and dear to my heart. I have spoken a number of times in this House about my own experience with domestic and family violence. I have spoken about how this insidious crime stopped me and my sisters from having a normal childhood. I have spoken about how I was so often scared in my own home and how I was beaten by someone who was supposed to be protecting me and how I tried unsuccessfully to stop my mother from being beaten. Sadly, this is a story shared and understood by far too many Queenslanders.

Whilst all of us in this House can recognise that Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month is a very important initiative, it is important that we all remember that it is every day of every month that we should be working to stop domestic violence. In this House we should reflect on the fact that in 2016 alone some 18 women, children and men lost their lives to domestic violence here in Queensland. That is a quarter of all domestic violence deaths in Australia. This is not a record we should be proud of. It shows we have a long way to go to stop domestic violence. More than ever, we must recognise that no matter where people come from, no matter what their job or their socioeconomic status, domestic and family violence affects all walks of life.

This month also marks a year since I was tasked by the Leader of the Opposition with taking on this very important portfolio. I am encouraged by the work we have done in this space in just 12 short months which will make a real difference to so many women, children and men who may face DV in the future. As I mentioned, earlier this year the parliament passed tough new domestic violence laws introduced by the opposition. These laws give extra protection to victims and their families. Despite these important wins, the battle against domestic violence is far from over. In fact, in the last fortnight we heard of another alleged domestic violence related homicide. I am glad that the new laws that we brought in a few months ago will hopefully assist and stop further domestic violence deaths.

In the case of young Shelsea Schilling on the Gold Coast, if her family had been notified that her former partner was out on parole Shelsea may still be here. In Tara Brown's case, if GPS tracking had been in place, maybe Tara would still be here as well. On the Gold Coast alone more than 10 per cent of DVO breaches are committed by serial offenders who have breached their orders at least five times in the previous five years. There is currently a 7½-month wait to get a hearing at the Southport DV court. Police on the Gold Coast are telling local members and anyone who will listen that DV is their single biggest issue. Sadly, all we have seen from this Palaszczuk Labor government is lots of talk but no action.

Just last week we saw the embattled minister penning a letter to the *Townsville Bulletin* claiming credit for changes introduced by the LNP and trying to rewrite history. Unfortunately for the minister, *Hansard* shows that Labor actually voted against certain changes, including parole notification changes put forward by the LNP. Whilst Labor was voting no five times to the LNP's bill there were mothers up in the gallery sobbing each time they voted no. We all remember that the parliamentary committee report which analysed the bill actually showed that Labor opposed the whole bill.

The sad truth is that the minister's letter was a shameful distraction from her inability to implement the 140 recommendations of the *Not now, not ever* report in the two years and three months she has been in office. In fact, just 40 of the recommendations—less than a third of the total—have been implemented. Rather than trying to rewrite history and spread completely misleading statements throughout the media, the minister would do well to spend her time fast-tracking reforms to better protect domestic violence victims and their families. Is it any wonder that people have had a gutful of politicians who are all talk and no action? Queensland is stagnating, the community is crying out for leadership and we have a government stuck in neutral when it comes to domestic and family violence. Thankfully, from opposition we have passed laws that will make a real difference. I am very proud of the reforms we have passed because I know firsthand what a difference they will make.