



Speech By  
**Ros Bates**


**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Domestic and Sexual Violence**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.27 pm): I rise to speak on Labor's appalling record when it comes to protecting our most vulnerable. We have a child safety system in crisis, with kids at risk—right now, today—waiting helplessly as they remain in Labor's backlogs. We have a domestic violence crisis, as women and their children are held up in unsafe motels because Labor will not invest in services at the pointy end. We have thousands of offenders breaching domestic violence orders at record levels—over and over again. We still have victims of domestic violence living in fear for their lives, where no GPS trackers were fitted to dangerous offenders and, worse still, victims being told to sleep in their cars on the Gold Coast as there is no room at the inn.

We also have a sexual violence crisis. Domestic violence does not stop outside the bedroom door. This is an issue which is going from bad to worse. It has been ignored by the Premier, the Minister for Women and the entire do-nothing Palaszczuk Labor government for 2½ years. Despite being dragged kicking to the table on domestic violence, Labor has remained silent on sexual violence. For victims and their families in places like the Gold Coast, Labor's silence is deafening.

Violence against women remains one of the biggest challenges we face as a state. In 2016 we saw the highest number of sexual offences reported to police in nine years. More than 6,200 offences in total across the state makes for a crisis. On the Gold Coast, latest figures from police show sexual violence is at a 12-month high. Monthly data for May and June 2017 has shown 50 sexual violence offences each month. Too often women are experiencing frustrations and despair with the justice system which is causing many to lose hope in the system and to give up. Delays, a lack of support, expenses, legal fees, limited access to legal advice, secondary traumatisation and a range of other issues continue to plague victims long after the immediate trauma of a sexual assault.

Through my regular discussions with support services on the Gold Coast, I have heard some truly horrific stories. What we need to recognise is that sexual assault can happen to anyone. It happened to Jean, a woman in her 80s who was cornered and sexually abused by a worker in her retirement village. It happened to Ruby, a 16-year-old student who went to a house party, woke up with no clothes on and found out at school that several boys had engaged in sexual acts with her and recorded it on Snapchat.

It happened to Elaine, a 30-year-old stay-at-home mum with one child who is often 'pressured or coerced' into having sex with her husband, because if she says no he threatens to leave her and take their child. It happened to 60-year-old Jean, whose husband drugged her into unconsciousness and then engaged in sexual acts. It happened to Jill, who as a 20-year-old had moved to the Gold Coast into a share house and was raped by a cotenant on her second night. It happened to Sue, a 45-year-old woman who presented to the emergency department after her abusive partner strangled her and forced

her to act out violent pornographic scenes he had viewed. These are real stories, real cases which have been shared with me by support services on the front line who deal with cases like these and many more.

More needs to be done to actively encourage anyone who has been a victim of sexual violence to report it to police. On the coast we have some fantastic services that are helping victims of sexual violence, but, shamefully, funding for services has remained stagnant as Labor does nothing. To think that domestic and family violence and sexual violence are not linked is naive. The facts speak for themselves. The latest ABS report into recorded crime shows in Queensland 337 sexual assaults occurred in an intimate partner setting. A further 1,096 were committed by a family member, of which 482 were a parent. Even more shocking is the fact that most of these sexual assaults are happening in the home. A large portion of all sex offences committed against a victim is done by a loved one.

Just like we have seen when it comes to domestic violence action the LNP took charge of in government and has continued through opposition, we need a whole-of-community approach to tackle sexual violence. Victims need to be able to report this insidious crime without fear of being judged. We need to ensure that our services are being coordinated to reduce the re-traumatisation of victims, both children and adults. One thing is clear: Labor's inaction on this issue sends a clear message that sexual violence is not a priority for them. Only the LNP can be trusted to build stronger families and take action to stamp out domestic, family and sexual violence in our communities.