




Speech By
Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 5 September 2018

MOTION

Domestic and Family Violence, Public Service Leave Provisions

 **Ms SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (5.46 pm): I rise to speak against the Leader of the Opposition's motion this evening. The Queensland government is committed to putting an end to domestic and family violence. So committed am I to addressing the levels of domestic violence that I co-hosted a bipartisan event with the member for Bonney today and so I am disappointed that the LNP is putting forward a motion that seeks to undermine the achievements of a safer workplace and a safer society for women. It is a cheap political shot over a very important—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Members to my left, the level of interjections from members to my left as opposed to those to my right during the debate has been considerably different. I know this is an issue that you are very passionate about. However, I ask you to cease your interjections so I can hear the member's contribution.

Ms SCANLON: The bipartisan *Not now, not ever* task force report identified a need to support both victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence. Queensland's Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy seeks for Queensland's workplaces and work forces to challenge the attitudes on violence and effectively support people affected while also ensuring perpetrators stop using violence and are held to account.

With 65 per cent of Queenslanders in the labour force, all workplaces have a significant role to play in promoting cultural change and responding to employees using violence. As one of Queensland's largest employers, we have an ability to bring cultural change in the workforce and in our society, which is why we need to break the cycle of behaviour in our community. That is why the Palaszczuk government has taken a leadership role nationally in this area. We are leading by example.

Many organisations have domestic and family violence protection policies and initiatives that support employees who are experiencing violence. However, workplaces both nationally and internationally are still grappling with how to respond appropriately to employees who use or may use violence and abuse in their personal relationships. Both victims and perpetrators can be present within every workplace, whether it be government departments, a large mining company, a small NGO or even a parliament. They can be our colleagues or our friends. Isolating and demonising them will not stop the violence. Recognised leaders in the field of domestic and family violence response such as DVConnect and Australia's CEO Challenge advocate that without addressing the behaviour of those who use or may use violence the cycle of domestic violence will not be broken.

If providing paid leave to those who use power and control in their relationships prevents further harm and facilitates access to treatment, then it is a policy that both sides of the House should support. We are committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all employees. Everyone has the right to feel safe and supported in the workplace. This includes victims, those using violence,

bystanders, carers, and those assisting people who have experienced domestic and family violence. Ensuring the safety of those impacted by domestic and family violence is of paramount importance. It affects their wellbeing, attendance, productivity and performance.

There is also a need to ensure that the person who has used, or is using, violence is provided access to paid leave in order to access support services, counselling and programs to address their behaviour; however, our focus is on the victim. Special leave should be provided to perpetrators of domestic and family violence in very specific circumstances, as already outlined by the minister. Experts such as DVConnect report that there are two red flags for the escalation of violence: the loss of an income or employment and the loss of housing. If someone who has used violence remains employed while engaging with services to take accountability for violence, this could in fact act as a protective factor for the victim.

Providing resources to those who use violence is an important and often vital piece of the overall response to keeping victims safe. This is a proactive way of holding those who use violence accountable for their actions in a way that best supports their victims and helps break the cycle of violence. Holding employees accountable for their behaviour is fundamental in a variety of contexts. Any Queensland government employee convicted of an indictable offence would be subject to disciplinary action. The safety and wellbeing of victims of domestic violence and supporting those experiencing and fleeing violence are our paramount concerns. The government's policy on domestic and family violence leave is a progressive and comprehensive approach to ending violence whereby employees who experience violence are safe and supported.