




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 4 December 2020

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Women and Girls

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (9.53 am): I am so proud of the budget handed down by the Palaszczuk government this week and how we have responded to the impacts of COVID. I am proud because we have put women front and centre in our economic response, because we know that women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. I am incredibly proud to table this morning the Palaszczuk government's fifth Queensland *Women's economic statement*.

Tabled paper: Queensland Government: Queensland Budget 2020-21—Women's Economic Statement [363](#).

Women have borne the economic brunt of COVID more than men by working in frontline jobs such as aged and health care, teaching and child care and cleaning; in industries most impacted by shutdowns such as retail and hospitality; and in part-time and casualised work. More women than men have lost their jobs during COVID, and at home they still are primarily responsible for the care of children and for domestic work, both of which have increased in COVID. The Palaszczuk government has responded by creating skills pathways for women through Skilling Queenslanders for Work, our free TAFE and our free apprenticeships. We continue to implement policies to support more women in male dominated industries such as STEM and traditional trades and to support them to thrive in small business.

Tragically, the COVID-19 pandemic has also seen an increase in violence against women in Queensland. Almost one in 10 women in a relationship experienced domestic violence during COVID, with two-thirds saying the attacks started or became worse during COVID. We have committed \$152 million this financial year to the safety of Queensland women and girls and delivered on each and every one of the 140 recommendations of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence, *Not now, not ever*.

While I am on feet talking about women's safety, I want to bring to the attention of the House a dangerous and reckless move by the federal government. This week the federal LNP pushed through the House of Representatives legislation that will abolish the Family Court. By undermining the family law system, Scott Morrison and Christian Porter are putting Queensland women and families at risk in the time of their greatest need. Evidence shows that specialist knowledge of domestic violence is critical when making decisions in family law cases. The Queensland Law Society and the Queensland Bar Association have strongly opposed the proposed merger of the Family Court with the Federal Circuit Court, and the Family Court's first chief justice, Elizabeth Evatt, said that it would lead to undesirable outcomes for children and families. Women's Legal Services Australia spokesperson Angela Lynch said that her organisation's opposition to the merger was about ensuring the safety and best interests of the child and the safety of adult victim survivors of family violence in family law proceedings.

I have written to my federal counterpart the Minister for Women, Senator Marise Payne, and urged her to consider the views of stakeholders from the legal profession and women's advocates to stop the passage of these bills in the Senate, to save the Family Court and to make sure that women and children are kept safe in their time of need.