




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2020

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Domestic and Family Violence

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (1.23 pm): It is time for Queenslanders to come together to deal with the issue of domestic violence because everyone deserves to live safe and free from violence. The latest data released by the Queensland Police Service show a shocking increase in domestic violence orders, DVOs, in Queensland. In the last 12 months from March to February 2020 alone there have been 31,759 breaches in Queensland—an increase of 14 per cent or more than 3,800 breaches compared to the same time last year.

Perpetrators are not afraid to breach their domestic violence orders because they have nothing to fear. If the current protection measures are not working to reduce the scourge of DV then the government should explore tougher laws to deal with perpetrators. We must learn that just throwing money at a problem does not help. You need to have clear goals and policy platforms as well. The shocking increase in breaches shows that Labor is failing to protect those victims and families from further harm.

We have said that a future LNP government will introduce the toughest strangulation laws in the country; immediately review the current criminal justice framework to implement new laws such as coercive control; roll out personal safety devices to people at high risk; and provide grants up to \$2,000 for emergency accommodation assistance, because we just are not providing services to these vulnerable people. We will implement new laws aimed at helping our police do their jobs and improve community safety.

Our police and courts are overwhelmed under the current system, which is not working to protect families and hold perpetrators to account. Under our plan, introduced by the Leader of the Opposition, frontline police will be given tougher laws and new powers to issue DV orders on the spot. From talking to our colleagues in this place who were former police officers, anything from three to six hours is wasted with the laws that are currently in place. This takes our hardworking police off the beat to deal with DV orders.

Whilst *Not now, not ever* was important reform, it is a government responsibility to be proactive in responding to the changing nature of DV. We should be reviewing *Not now, not ever*, not relying on it as the only reform that has been introduced in this place in a long time. An LNP government would be relentless in ensuring domestic violence policies are up to date and working as they should be. Underlying causes of DV violence are complex, but that does not mean stopping it is without hope. Domestic violence must be prevented because the harm it causes reaches every corner of our society, particularly here in Queensland. We want Queensland to be the safest place to live, work and raise a family.

Domestic violence is above politics. The LNP is happy to work with the government to implement an immediate response to community concerns. I was hoping that the responsible minister, who stood up in this place a little while ago, might have made some comments about DV, and particularly about

the tragedies that confronted us a couple of weeks ago. Unfortunately, we had a ramble about youth justice and some other reforms where they are now accepting some LNP policies. We must get these reforms on the table. The LNP—I will say it again—is willing to work with the current government to get these reforms into legislation immediately.

Domestic violence and violence survivors should not be forgotten in this current crisis and with the social distancing issue. That is why I am again taking the opportunity to make sure that everyone is aware that the LNP has an important suite of new measures to strengthen our domestic violence strategy in this state. We are determined to keep Queenslanders safe and secure by preventing violence, supporting survivors and holding offenders to account. I believe the government can do more to both prevent domestic violence and help survivors. Again, this issue should be above politics. Queensland's laws are clearly failing to protect victims and every aspect must be looked at to fix the system.

We have talked about community safety. It must come first. We must have a review of the criminal justice system, and there are also the other important reforms that we have mentioned. The LNP, as we have said, will be relentless in ensuring that these policies are up to date and are working. When we consider that in the last five years 70 women have died at the hands of a perpetrator, I think all of us in this place are looking for strong leadership and for this parliament to get on with the job. Let us review *Not now, not ever*. Let us get on with the job of introducing the new reforms that the LNP—the Leader of the Opposition, the shadow Attorney-General, the shadow minister for police and others—have put together. This is something we can do together in this place.

We should be making sure that the whole domestic violence framework is reviewed. We know now, after five years, it is time to introduce new reforms to make sure that we are providing key policy platforms for those in our community who do so much to keep vulnerable men and women free from the violence of perpetrators. We know that early intervention is an important part of any strategy, but clearly with the policy vacuum we have from the current government now is not the time to do nothing.