



Speech By
Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

APPROPRIATION (2020-2021) BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (6.52 pm): Tonight I rise to speak to the appropriation bill and in particular the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee report. I acknowledge and thank the members of the committee and also the secretariat for their ongoing hard work. This government keeps talking and setting up task forces. It keeps a dialogue going instead of taking action and implementing legislative and structural reform to support the survivors of domestic violence and reduce the number of victims of this very preventable and horrific state of play. We see more investment yet we see more women, more children and men dying at the hands of their intimate partner, parent or abuser. I speak to stakeholders all across this state and, while we welcome the dialogue around coercive control, during the estimates process I asked the minister what legislative reform had been taken 10 months after that horrific tragedy. Recently we saw an announcement which took just on 12 months, yet the opposition responded immediately with the announcement of a comprehensive DV policy, with coercive control being one of the measures.

How much longer do those victims have to wait before we see real tangible action? Nine women in this state have died since Hannah Clarke and her children. My colleague pointed out the impact of the length of time coronial inquiries will take to ascertain what role coercive control had in their deaths. The government has also failed to recognise non-lethal strangulation. Legislative definitions of 'choke', 'suffocate' or 'strangle' were outlined during estimates in my questioning of the minister. The response that we got was that there will be a watching brief. While the minister watches, women and men continue to be at risk. Then there is how this will be monitored and how this will be defined. Advocates are continuously raising that due to this lack of clarity perpetrators are not facing prosecution, and the statistics attest to that. After speaking with local police services across the state, I learned that there are many who are charged but never face prosecution because of the lack of clarity around these definitions in the Criminal Code. This is a serious issue and one that has been raised repeatedly since I have been elected. This was demonstrated through the lack of funding commitment made to the strangulation institute, which I recently visited, and I certainly hope that this is rectified in the upcoming budget process.

I also want to acknowledge broadly the services in Queensland, in particular Micah Projects here in Brisbane as well as other services that I have recently visited right across the state in Cairns, Townsville and the Gold Coast, and all of those who are at the coalface who are dealing every day with

the impacts of this insidious, violent crime that we call domestic and family violence. I also want to acknowledge the hard work of the services in my own region: the Mackay combined women's services and the domestic violence service in Mackay as well as the Whitsunday Counselling and Support Service that are at the coalface. While I acknowledge the government's additional funding of \$7.5 million to domestic and family violence due to the impacts of COVID-19, many of these services have since outlined that it is what happens to those victims they are trying to help day in and day out when that money is gone that needs to be considered. The demand for service far outweighs what they are adequately resourced to do, and it is not slowing down; it is getting worse.

While we continue with talkfests in this parliament, while we appoint more task forces and while we are laissez faire in the media about how important are the lives of women, children and other victims—be it men or the elderly—more people's lives are being taken every single day, as we saw reported in today's paper. I certainly send my condolences to that family. There is more that can be done and there is quicker action that we can all take, so I urge the government in that consideration and commend my comments to the House.