




Speech By
Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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**JUSTICE LEGISLATION (COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE—PERMANENCY)
AMENDMENT BILL**


 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (12.57 pm): I look forward to being able to contribute today to the Justice Legislation (COVID-19 Emergency Response—Permanency) Amendment Bill 2021. The focus of my contribution in the House today is in regard to domestic and family violence reforms which have been much welcomed by the sector but also, most importantly, by those victims of domestic and family and sexual violence across our state.

I would like to draw the attention of the House to the changes that will be made and that have been outlined by many members of the House. In particular, accessibility was highlighted by the Queensland Women's Legal Service, as well as many other stakeholders when I have travelled across the state, and the fact that these reforms, which were once put in place just to deal with the pandemic, will benefit victims across our state more broadly and will mitigate some of the barriers for victims, predominantly women and children, when it comes to domestic violence orders.

I would also like to draw the attention of the House to the accessibility component of that. The explanatory notes outline that it is now much easier, in very concerning and dangerous circumstances, for victims of domestic and family violence to be able to access and have legitimised a domestic violence order when they cannot access a solicitor, a justice of the peace or a commissioner for declarations to verify documents in urgent situations when they are seeking temporary protection orders.

I would like to highlight that there are also limitations which still exist and barriers posed to women in particular who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and who may require interpreters for legal advice during court appearances. Whether that be by the introduction now of video link or telephone link, there are still barriers and we have demonstrated that there is more work to do. I would also like to highlight that there are significant barriers and an interrelationship that exists between domestic and family violence and those suffering from sexual violence.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm.

 **Ms CAMM:** Legal consultation on the reforms was undertaken. We acknowledge the submissions of the Queensland Law Society and Women's Legal Services. Both parties outlined their support of the bill. The focus was on changes whereby AV and audio links can be utilised at the discretion of the magistrate so that victims can provide their evidence virtually. The real life translation of this is that victims who have experienced significant trauma and violence do not at some point have to be in the same room as the alleged perpetrator. Through my engagement with counselling services across the sector, in particular speaking with survivors firsthand, this reliving of trauma in front of the perpetrator can be just as terrifying as experiencing the trauma itself. The alternative verification of private applications for domestic violence orders facilitates agility and responsiveness when there is a serious risk posed.

In the interest of victims I ask the minister whether this data will be reported, as the number of times this provision is used and the circumstances in which it is utilised can help better inform further reform and continuous improvement in the process. While legal stakeholders have indicated they

believe that in domestic, family and criminal matters the best evidence is obtained in person, this is not always the view of the victim, their court support worker, doctor or counsellor, in particular in the circumstances of a high-risk case.

We know from Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network and DVConnect that throughout the pandemic and as we emerge from lockdowns the rate and severity of domestic and sexual violence has increased across our state. Whilst this pandemic has contributed to an increase in victims, it has also facilitated—through this legislative reform and this bill—innovation and alternatives that provide genuine options for victims. This reform enhances their accessibility to the provision of evidence; however, not for all victims, as I mentioned prior to the break. Women who come from non-English-speaking backgrounds still face significant barriers in the court system and evidential process which we need to overcome.

I travel across the state in my role as shadow minister for the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence, and on a recent visit to the Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service I attended an integrated response meeting. I also attended the Gladstone's Women's Health Centre. As reported in the national media today, victims are being advised they have to wait up to 36 hours for a forensic examination in terms of providing evidence of rape. Hospitals and emergency services are short-staffed. With regard to intimate partner violence, every service I meet with reports that we are seeing an increase in sexual violence between intimate partners. If a woman or man is sexually assaulted or raped, rape victims have to wait 24 hours. In the case of Gladstone, they could not even be seen by a forensic medical officer and were advised to go to the police station to pick up a rape kit.

I raise this issue on behalf of every victim in the state, advocates of Queensland sexual assault services and advocacy groups. This bill seeks to implement permanent changes as a result of COVID-19, yet under our existing and failing health system a rape victim in a traumatised state cannot be seen by a health professional to ensure important evidence is obtained because there is no adequately trained person or the emergency department is failing. This is shameful. The words 'we must do better' are an insult to victims who have been sexually assaulted or raped. This situation must be immediately addressed across the entire state.

I would like to also bring the attention of the House to the court support that is happening on the back of this legislative change, particularly in my local community, and commend the Broken Ballerina Foundation. It has been working very closely with magistrates, the Mackay court service and court support workers to ensure that victims, the majority of whom are women, are supported through the process of giving evidence. I will be very pleased to attend one of the future domestic violence courts later in the month to witness firsthand the extra facilities they have fitted out in the court support room for women.

I would also like to touch on the liquor reforms in this legislation. I take this opportunity to thank the State Development and Regional Industries Committee, their members and the secretariat. One of the artisan breweries that operates in the Whitsundays—I know they operate in other parts of Queensland as well—is Ballistic Brewery, and I would like to encourage the industry and ensure we consistently engage with this part of the sector. Craft beer is not just a growing industry but in North Queensland beer in general is well-received and a really significant contributor to our local economy. I know that while this legislation touches on wine—which I know that many in this House are fans of—many across the state who support the craft brewery industry have certainly been advocating loud and hard. I hope this is something the government continues to monitor and that we work closely with that part of the industry. Along with my colleagues, I will support these amendments to the bill.