



Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) (2020-2021) BILL

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Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation (2020-2021) Bill

Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, Report

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (11.35 am): I rise to speak on the appropriations bill, this time from the perspective of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's examination of the legislation. As many in this place know, I am—and have long been—a passionate advocate for women and families who find themselves suffering at the hands of domestic and family violence. As a survivor myself I do understand the harrowing road these people take and the supports they need in order to return to society after the traumatic events that often take place—always take place—at the hands of those they love and trust. Sadly, we know that trust is often misplaced.

Year after year we on this side of the House have heard hand-wringing and excuses from the government about why Queensland women and children are not being protected. Last year more than 28,000 Queenslanders made domestic violence order applications. That is more than 530 a week. The LNP were the ones pushing for coercive control to be a summary offence as part of domestic violence offences. I have been pushing for it for five years. I do not need anyone to tell me what coercive and controlling behaviour is. I lived it, I know what it is and I have known about it for years. We know from tragic cases like that of Hannah Clarke and her three beautiful children that the seeds of that murderous violence grew from the controlling and manipulative behaviours of their partners.

A broader domestic violence offence could cover physical violence, strangulation, coercive control, financial control and sexual violence. All of these things happen within domestic and family violence. Domestic violence does not stop outside the bedroom door. Coercive, controlling behaviour is the one tool these animals use on their families, their wives and their kids to control them. Over five years, as a result of the extensive consultation I have had with survivors and my sisters—who are also survivors of domestic and family violence—and the groups who advocate on their behalf, I know the difficulties of attempting to prosecute coercive control as a standalone offence will cause a problem because the onus of proof is always on the victim.

It is disappointing that, 12 months after the horrific death of Hannah, only now is the government forming a consultation task force. We urge the government to consider our plan to introduce the new offence of domestic violence. We urge this government to protect victims of domestic violence through the court process. Some work has been done, but more needs to be done. We urge this government to introduce Tara's law—as a result of the death of Tara Brown—so there is a pro-disclosure of previous offending against intimate partners and their families. Women and their families should be told when a

prospective partner has form so they can make informed decisions about their future. We urge this government to ensure that all magistrates rotate through the specialist domestic violence court so they can grow their knowledge about this insidious crime. We urge this government to set up a domestic violence one-stop support network. Too many women are falling through the cracks. Too many people have had 30 points of contact with domestic violence agencies and they are still dead.

This government must consider the offence of strangulation as deserving a harder, more deterrent penalty. The offence should be aligned with the penalties for grievous bodily harm, which is exactly what it is. The Red Rose Foundation was established to support victims of strangulation and advocate for law reform to support these women. They also want a domestic violence commissioner as they have in the UK. They need money to keep helping these women—and even children—who are attacked with hands around their throats.

We welcome the government's commitment to counselling and crisis response, but we know it is often too little and too late. According to Queensland courts data, there were 7,206 DVO breaches across the state between July and September last year—representing a 30.5 per cent increase on the same period last year. Earlier this week we saw another tragic case, with a woman killed in a house fire by her former partner after she called the police reporting a breach of DVO taken out against that same person.

I am proud to have been part of an LNP team that introduced the toughest domestic violence laws in Australia from opposition. After the tragic death of Teresa Bradford, we ensured that the presumption of bail was reversed—if in doubt, do not let them out. I have had the privilege of standing shoulder to shoulder with mothers of murdered victims—like Tara Brown's mother, Teresa Bradford's mother, Shelsea Schilling's mother and Bianca Faith Gervin's mother. All of these women are in a club that no-one wants to or should ever have to be a part of. Sadly, that club is growing, and now Lloyd and Sue Clarke share this pain. The family of Doreen Langham, who was killed at Logan just two days ago, will be part of this grieving circle now. We must do more. We have to do more. More women are dying.