




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 29 March 2022

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Domestic and Family Violence Prevention

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (2.34 pm): The tragic deaths of Hannah Clarke and her precious children Aaliyah, Laianah and Trey have horrified all Queenslanders and, like all Queenslanders, I have been sickened to hear the harrowing details that are emerging through the inquest, and it has been incredibly difficult to read and to watch. Through all of that, I have to say that I have been inspired by the resilience and the strength of Hannah in the face of such an indescribable situation and I want to pay tribute to her bravery.

I also want to thank Sue and Lloyd Clarke, who have used Hannah's story to raise awareness around a dangerous form of domestic violence—coercive control. I have also heard countless stories from women who, after having heard Hannah's story, are seeing parallels and they have been motivated to reach out to services and to family. One survivor told me how she begged to be hit so that the violence would be real, because at that moment she thought it was all in her head.

Coercive control is a dangerous form of domestic violence used to instil fear in victims. Perpetrators use tactics such as isolating women from family and friends, tracking their movements through invasive surveillance, controlling access to money, where she goes, what she wears. Fundamentally, it is about power and control and the belief that too many men have that they are entitled to this power.

Previously many survivors lacked the language or the knowledge to describe the regime of terror that they were suffering under. Listening to many of Hannah's friends and family give their accounts at the inquest, it is clear that at the time many of them were unable to describe the regime of terror that Hannah was living under but they just knew something was wrong and that it was dangerous. I want everyone to know that if you are concerned about your friends and your family who may be in an abusive relationship there are services that can help. Together with Telstra, Griffith University and the MATE Bystander team, we have developed the Be There app to help people be effective bystanders. We are trying to make it easier for Queenslanders to identify what coercive control is and what to do and how to respond earlier and appropriately, because it can be a very complex situation. We all have a role in ending violence against women.

Hannah's legacy and the ongoing advocacy of Sue and Lloyd Clarke have also contributed to the Palaszczuk government's commitment to criminalise coercive control. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce has handed down its report on how we best do that and the report is very clear: we cannot criminalise this behaviour until our systems and our community understand what coercive control is, know how to identify it and how to appropriately respond. The report makes several recommendations on how we need to improve training and how we improve training for our frontline responders along with expanding training for more integrated responses within our service system so that we can better

protect victims but also hold perpetrators to account. The report also includes recommendations aimed at preventing coercive control and, in particular, educating young people on what is a respectful relationship, and this is really crucial work.

Again, I want to thank Sue and Lloyd Clarke, who have been using Hannah's story to educate young people and their parents on some of the subtle warnings of this insidious form of abuse and I know that they are working closely with Carolyn from Beyond DV and talking to young high school girls and their mums about what the dangerous signs are. Work is already well underway right across government agencies on the recommendations of the report, and I look forward to tabling the response in parliament soon.

I want to pass on my condolences to all of the family and friends of Hannah Clarke and I look forward to receiving the findings from the Coroner. Domestic and family violence is a national crisis and the Palaszczuk government will continue to do what we can to keep women safe and hold perpetrators to account.