




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Domestic and Family Violence, Coercive Control

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (9.56 am): Today marks a significant milestone for Queensland and for women's safety. Today, I will introduce the first round of legislative reforms to come out of the recommendations of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce's *Hear her voice* report. These reforms will strengthen Queensland's response to coercive control before the introduction of a standalone criminal offence next year.

The task force made it very clear that system-wide reform was needed before any new coercive control offence came into effect. The bill to be introduced today is the first step in this system-wide reform. It will broaden the definition of domestic and family violence to refer to a pattern of behaviour. This is about shifting our approach to domestic violence to focus on the dangerous patterns of abusive behaviour that occur over time, rather than single incidents of violence.

It also proposes amendments to modernise and strengthen the definition of unlawful stalking in the Criminal Code to include intimidation, harassment or abuse. This is aimed at better capturing the way that modern technology is being used to control and harass victims. These reforms will further strengthen the court's consideration of previous domestic violence history and the court's response to cross application for protection orders. We have to make sure that it is the person most in need that we protect. The bill also includes amendments to the Criminal Code to modernise outdated terms which have been in place since 1899, including carnal knowledge and maintaining a sexual relationship with a child. We must ensure that the language of our laws do not trivialise or soften what are reprehensible actions.

These reforms come at a significant time. October is Sexual Violence Awareness Month and it is an opportunity for all Queenslanders to take a stand against sexual violence. Despite the devastating impact that sexual assault can have on a victim's life, it remains often a taboo, recklessly misunderstood topic. I have long championed this government's history of taking proactive steps to end the cycles of disrespect and inequality which drive sexual, domestic and family violence, and the legislation being introduced today is one more of those steps.

I want to thank the task force, and in particular the Hon. Margaret McMurdo, for all the work in this incredibly important space. I also want to thank the hundreds of women who made submissions to the task force. These reforms could not have happened without their bravery.

Finally, I want to thank all of the advocates who have been pushing for these changes. I want to pay tribute to Sue and Lloyd Clarke and the Small Steps 4 Hannah Foundation and women like Grace Tame who have been pushing for changes to criminal codes all around the country. Thank you and I look forward to continuing to work with all of you as we move to the next stages of these important reforms.