




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 8 November 2022

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Domestic and Family Violence

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (2.47 pm): I want to talk about something that is often difficult for us to consider, and that is domestic violence and coercive control that continue to be amongst the most common and distressing of behaviours victims have to endure and police and courts have to deal with. We are constantly told how much is being done and how much is being spent by this government to address this problem.

I am here to report that much more needs to be done in getting the simple things right—the basics of communication and court processes—not just ticking boxes, issuing media releases but actually showing some care for those involved in the system. I fear it is currently all talk and the recommendations of the *Hear her voice* report are not being implemented as they should—in particular, recommendations 88 and 89.

I want to report from a pretty immediate experience of people very close to me. The daughter of great family friends of ours experienced a harrowing and upsetting domestic violence experience only two weeks ago. My daughter, who is her best friend, was with her at the time. The incident was reported to the police, and let me say the police were very good. Immediate orders were issued, evidence and statements were gathered, and the charges were set down for hearing in the Magistrates Court last Tuesday. It is here where the system fell down, where getting the simple things right simply did not happen.

Police had urged our friend to attend the DV court in Brisbane at the Magistrates Court complex for the hearing. My daughter accompanied her as a support person, along with her mother and brother. This is my daughter Katie's version of events—

I recently supported my closest friend at the Domestic and Family Violence Court in Brisbane Magistrates Court. After her presence was requested by police, and being told it would be beneficial to her case, she made the difficult decision to attend the hearing for a DVO order and face her alleged perpetrator. When we arrived at 8:30am, my friend checked in with the court and requested to speak to a Duty Solicitor. We spent a total of four hours, waiting for someone to provide us with information about the case and when it would be heard.

I might add that they were provided with a safe room but our friend's brother, who had come along, could not go into the safe room. He had to wait outside in the court where the alleged perpetrator was. Katie continues—

The only clear information we ever received in those four hours was that her perpetrator had checked in that morning and that the case would not be called until my friend had spoken with the Duty Solicitor. As we found out at 12.30 pm when the solicitor finally spoke with my friend, the matter had been mentioned and adjourned at 9:00 am that morning. Half an hour after we arrived! Those four hours spent waiting at the court were filled with anxiety and fear, it was incredibly upsetting and this was made only worse by the fact no one provided us with any information. While the alleged perpetrator had been able to get in, get the matter adjourned and then get out within half an hour, my friend waited, feeling like a prisoner, unaware of what was going on. Thankfully, my friend has many support people and her situation, while awful, is not as horrendous as many other victims of domestic violence; I can only imagine how distressing, traumatising, upsetting and frustrating the experience in the DV Court would be for those victims. If there is one court that ought to prioritise the wellbeing of victims, it is the DV Court, where victims are the most

vulnerable and in the most life-threatening situations. The fact that it failed my friend so tremendously is shameful. In light-hearted terms, the court system that day was a “flop”; but the very sad reality is that it showcased how severely flawed the system is; it is disorganised, unprofessional, uninformative ... As is said often but remains true as ever each time ‘justice delayed is justice denied.’

You will have to forgive her that; she is studying to be a lawyer. This is what our friend told me about her feelings when she got to court. This is at 8.30 in the morning—

I was then already panicking about seeing the perpetrator and had started crying, to which the person who had checked us in and the security personnel had offered to let me wait in the safety room away from the perpetrator.

That is a good thing. She continues—

Then 4 and a half hours and zero communication later she finds out it's a mammoth waste of time, energy and emotional effort.

Now no matter the reason why—and I am sure there will be reasons—it is clearly unacceptable that this has happened, because this is what it means, and again I quote—

Throughout the more than four hours I waited there, I was incredibly anxious and stressed as I feared facing the perpetrator and had no information on what was going on. I also faced multiple other women who were highly distressed from their own domestic violence matters, which was incredibly upsetting.

This situation is unacceptable. Despite all of its grandstanding promises, it is clear the government still does not have a grip on the system. Until it does, all too often these situations will continue.