




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR COOK**

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## **DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION (COMBATING COERCIVE CONTROL) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (4.07 pm): Today I rise to speak in support of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment 2022. I acknowledge the Attorney-General for all her efforts and hard work and the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee for their work in the examination of this bill.

Prior to walking into this House, I worked in Cairns for a community organisation that supported women and children experiencing domestic and family violence and homelessness. While trying to think about the words to put into this speech, I thought about one particular woman with whom I had worked who shared her story of how she had gone through coercive control in the early stages of her relationship and how she was totally blind that what was happening to her was the start of a domestic violence relationship. She said—

It starts with love bombing. You are made to feel like you are the most amazing person alive. You feel good about yourself and you get comfortable with the idea of being treated like a queen. Then everything changes. The body shaming and name calling starts. You get upset and you challenge it. You are labelled crazy. Everything you wear is ugly. You get told how ridiculous you look. You start to feel less about yourself. He uses that opportunity to tell you what to wear. He questions everything you do—where you go and what you do. You get accused of seeing other people. You stop doing things without him for argument sake. You start to feel trapped. You try to make sense of what is happening to you and around you. You want to talk to someone. He tells you that everyone is against him and the relationship, and tells you to stop sharing your business with anyone. You stop talking through your experience with the people you trust. You trust no-one. No-one will ever understand. You start to look inward for answers. Life suddenly becomes a very lonely place but you love him.

I have heard many stories from women escaping domestic and family violence. Mostly women would reach out because their experience puts them in a situation of homelessness and isolation. For some, reaching out to a support service is merely to talk about their situation and try to make sense of everything. Often they are not ready to take the big step to escape domestic and family violence and we find that they continue to go back to the person hurting them the most. This is why it is important for all of us—as individuals, in our families, in the community and in our workplaces—to keep this conversation alive by creating awareness of domestic and family violence. The more we talk about it, the more the message gets out there and we save lives. We educate the ones who do not really have a good understanding of the challenges faced by people in that situation.

Last year I attended the annual AFL Cape York House high tea in Cairns. It is an event to create awareness and raise vital funds in terms of domestic and family violence in Far North Queensland. I give a shout-out to Rick Hanlon, general manager of AFL Cape York House and a huge advocate in relation to domestic and family violence. At this event I had the opportunity to hear from guest speaker Angela Barker. Angela is a domestic and family violence survivor. Angela experienced domestic violence at the hands of an abusive partner at the tender age of 16. She was choked and beaten so violently. That would soon change Angela's life forever. One thing she said that stuck in my mind was, 'He is married now and he has a family. I have been robbed of a life, of getting married and having a family of my own.'

That is the whole reason we need to keep talking about domestic and family violence, because that is what it does to a person: it robs them of a normal and healthy life. Some people, like Angela, get to live, but when you are stripped of having a family it becomes very real. There are many other women like Angela. Sadly, some do not escape the hands of their violent partner. I thank Angela for her courage and for her work to raise awareness of domestic and family violence. I also thank AFL Cape York House for their continued work to raise awareness of domestic and family violence. I am particularly supportive of the work they do. AFL Cape York House supports many young Indigenous men from communities in my electorate of Cook, in Cape York and Torres Strait. Holding this event every year and getting those young men to participate gets them to be part of the conversation that is happening in community. Where we can build one person to stand up against domestic and family violence and where we can start early to change their thoughts about positive relationships into the future, it is a head start for us as a society.

I also commend all of the other organisations in my electorate doing amazing work to support vulnerable women and children going through domestic and family violence: Weipa Community Care, Cooktown and District Community Care, Pormpur Paanth in Pormpuraaw and Muru Kosker on Thursday Island. These are organisations doing amazing work to support women but also to create awareness of this very important topic.

I also give a shout-out to the councils in my electorate. The member for Traeger also mentioned support for men in this situation. I give credit to the councils in my electorate for thinking outside of the box, because most have taken their own initiative to set up safe houses that deter men away from the homes of families. Hope Vale and Kowanyama Aboriginal shire councils have identified that women and children are making the ultimate sacrifice to escape domestic and family violence by leaving their homes and that we should be keeping our women and children safe at home and removing the perpetrators from this situation. I really want to commend the councils in my electorate for thinking outside of the box and for walking this path to support not only the women in this situation but also the men. We should continue to encourage positive and healthy relationships, because that is what we all need. We should also get them to be part of this journey as we move towards better outcomes for everyone.

The bill proposes to amend the Criminal Code to rename, modernise and strengthen the offence of unlawful stalking and provide that for a relevant proceeding or a summary proceeding under the Justice Act 1886 for an accused person charged with domestic violence offence the prosecution must give the accused person a copy of the person's domestic violence history. The bill also replaces sexual offence terminology. This is a very important bill. I support all of the amendments in the bill. Our women and children deserve stronger measures to help keep them safe. These measures will also strengthen the agencies and the organisations in all of our communities out there working really hard to make a difference. At the end of the day, it means that we save lives and keep women at home. I think that is the ultimate goal for us. I commend this bill to the House.