




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.11 pm): I rise to contribute to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. We stand here today almost two years after the establishment of the independent task force to examine coercive control and review the need for a specific offence of domestic violence having regard to the experience of aggrieved spouses across the criminal justice system. The establishment of that task force was an election commitment by those opposite, a commitment similar to that made by the LNP some seven months prior. As I said at the time of the LNP's policy announcement, addressing coercive control was about implementing a full and proper response to domestic and family violence and for that reason I will not be opposing this bill.

Like some of my colleagues on this side of the House, I have personally seen the immediate and ongoing effects of both domestic and family violence and offending against children—as a police officer and more recently as the member for Burdekin. Let me say at the outset that there is no place and no excuse for either of these behaviours. Something I know from personal experience is that many times it is our police who are the first responders to domestic and family violence; likewise paramedics and ambulance staff are also frequently first responders to these types of incidents. These are confronting situations. Quite often the victim will blame themselves or an accident. This is not done because they condone the behaviour of the perpetrator, it is done out of fear of the perpetrator. Indeed, it was the role of police in responding to domestic and family violence that was the impetus for the commission of inquiry we saw last year. To quote from the recommendations of Judge Deborah Richards—

Police are the gatekeepers to the justice system, and their response can reduce or prevent future violence for victim-survivors and their children, hold perpetrators to account and, at times, save lives.

The recommendations go on to say—

It is essential that organisational structures are in place so officers can respond effectively to domestic and family violence

The recommendations continue by saying, quite simply, 'The QPS cannot do this alone.' I cannot agree more with Judge Richards. The QPS cannot do this alone. Not only do they need support to achieve the best possible outcome for victims, they need the resourcing and the legislation to, as Judge Richards rightly says, save lives. The report that those recommendations are contained in was provided to the Premier and relevant ministers on 14 November, but just seven days prior, the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee conducted its public hearing into this legislation. Witnesses included senior staff and representatives from a range of groups, including the Queensland Law Society, the Queensland Family and Child Commission, but who was not represented? The gatekeepers. Despite the committee reaching out to the Queensland Police Service, there was no representative at the hearing and not even a submission. I would be interested in the police minister's response as to why there was no representatives at those hearings and no submission provided.

The committee heard that an additional 10,000 complaints will be made to police each year due to this bill. If that is what it takes for this scourge to be addressed then that is what must be done, but the reality is that means an extra 880,000 policing hours per year, or 500 extra police dedicated solely to those complaints—police officers that must be well-trained investigators. We then have the recommendations of the commission of inquiry that I referred to earlier. As someone who has held responsibility for rostering one of Queensland’s largest police stations, I have calculated that at least an additional 810 officers and staff will be required for the full implementation of those recommendations. All in all, the evidence from the committee and the recommendations of the commission of inquiry totals more than 1,300 police officers and staff. What Queenslanders want to know is if these 1,300 extra police officers and staff are in addition to or included in the Premier and police minister’s 2020 election commitment or are they over and above that number?

Every member in this House has a responsibility to address the scourge of domestic and family violence, but we simply cannot ignore the facts. Despite this government having received close to 400 recommendations to prevent and better respond to domestic and family violence, we still have the situation where recommendations to better train police officers—and there have been recommendations for this to happen as a matter of urgency—those recommendations have not been implemented and according to the Queensland Audit Office we know that specialist domestic and family violence officers are not being assigned to specialist domestic and family violence roles.

Sadly, the Queensland Audit Office has also highlighted that despite recommendation after recommendation to this government, information is not being shared and entities are not working together. Just as we have seen in response to youth crime, cooperation is just not occurring. While entities are not cooperating, there is also a lack of oversight. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has not reviewed the placement of high-risk teams for at least six years resulting in some areas with the highest rates of domestic and family violence not even having a high-risk team. We know for a fact that Education Queensland does not have a full understanding of the success or otherwise of the Respect program. We know for a fact that Corrections cannot tell us how many perpetrators have been in Queensland’s prisons or how many are in supervision in the community and that there are no permanent programs for rehabilitating offenders in prison. We know that Legal Aid Queensland have concerns relating to the impact on their services and we know for a fact that despite all the claims this government has made, despite community uproar with regard to domestic and family violence, Queensland police and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General have not identified where additional services are most needed in regional areas. Even as recently as the task force progress report of December 2022, themes such as workforce capability and capacity, among others, were raised.

The amendments brought forward in this bill from the *Hear her voice* recommendations are a necessary early step to improve the justice system’s response to domestic and family violence. However, some of the measures will need to be monitored very closely. Legislative changes to ensure offenders can be held to account for these serious offences must be effective. We must do everything we can to protect women and children in this state.

Domestic and family violence does not just happen in our cities, it happens right across this state in remote communities in rural and regional Queensland and quite often, as is the case in my electorate, the support services are simply not there or are stretched to breaking point. Victims of domestic and family violence who live in rural areas deserve the same level of care, attention and response as those who live in city areas.

If there is one message that I can give to the minister today it is this: when it comes to resourcing organisations that provide services in our communities, please consider the fact that in many cases they are restricted by the tyranny of distance and a lack of resources. Queenslanders demand that domestic and family violence be addressed and when this bill is passed there will be no excuse for this government not to do exactly that.