




Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (11.48 am): I, too, rise to contribute to the debate of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The date of 19 February 2023 marked three years since the death of Hannah Clarke and her children, Aaliyah, Laianah and Trey, in a shocking domestic violence attack. I think we all remember that terrible day and the terrible tragedy which took place. It did shake the nation. That tragedy rightfully sparked more outrage across our communities. No-one can ever imagine the terror and pain that Hannah and her children suffered in those final moments. Four beautiful lives were destroyed by an act of pure evil. I have said in this House before that their cold-blooded murder had no meaning at all, but there was a message for us all. It was a clear message that we must act to save victims of domestic violence.

This is about the opportunities that we have as members of parliament to stand together and assist anyone who has been in this situation or who may be in this situation in the future. We in this House have a duty to protect Queenslanders who have suffered and continue to suffer from any form of domestic violence. Those who have been in this chamber for many years will know that this is a topic on which I have spoken many times in this House. Yesterday it was disappointing to hear a minister essentially talking down this side of the parliament for not having an interest or not understanding this issue. I recall standing in this chamber in 2017 when we in opposition—when the shadow Attorney-General was the leader of the opposition—changed bail laws after the terrible loss of Teresa Bradford—the ‘if in doubt, don’t let them out’ legislation—to reverse the onus of proof for bail. That happened by leading from this side of parliament.

I acknowledge the current Attorney-General for her work in relation to coercive control, but I believe that the government has been too slow and too reactive and has failed to follow through on recommendations to ensure we have the most effective response possible. I thank everyone involved in relation to the submissions to the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce. I know that many men and women from my region took the time to share their stories about coercive control and their experience with the criminal justice system.

I thank the members of the committee, in particular the members for Currumbin and Scenic Rim from our side of the House. It was an extremely difficult bill to review, and I acknowledge everyone involved in it. Whilst I support this bill and the updating of the terminology of ‘coercive control’, I continue to wait for both coercive control and domestic violence to be made summary offences in Queensland. Whilst I acknowledge this first step, I look forward to our continuing on this journey and in a very prompt manner. The number of women and children who die or suffer as a result of domestic and family violence is far too high. We are not seeing the progress that we need to see in order to keep these people safe. The LNP opposition has been trying to address this issue for many years.

**Ms King:** By cutting domestic violence services?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have spoken many times in this House about representing women who had absolutely no domestic violence services under the former Bligh government. As a private lawyer, that is why I on a pro bono basis, week in and week out, assisted those people and why I then decided to run for parliament, because the women had been let down by the former Bligh government in terms of having no domestic violence services. It was left to our side of politics to continue to restore those domestic violence services.

For the member for Pumicestone to think she knows what goes on in rural and regional Queensland when it comes to women faced with domestic violence! I call out that rubbish. It is misleading the House and it shows the ignorance of the current government when it comes to women in rural and regional Queensland and the few services they have. They also have few housing options. When they need to leave a domestic violence situation, where can they go? I tell the member for Pumicestone that right now in Chester Street, Nanango there is a four-bedroom house that has been left vacant by the Palaszczuk government for a ridiculous amount of time—and I will check whether it is two or three years. I continue to write to the Minister for Public Works about why that home is vacant. The response I have had is that there is no-one available to move into it. I say to the minister: there are many women and children who would love to be able to live in a four-bedroom house in Chester Street, Nanango. It is a beautiful home—a home vacated by one of our former doctors. Just give it up to the people who need it.

I also say to the member for Pumicestone that just seven days after the tragic incident involving Hannah Clarke and her beautiful children I stood up—I know that the Attorney-General knows this—and called for strengthened DV legislation concerning strangulation. I tabled a private member's bill in relation to that, but that has just disappeared since the election. We know that the government has done nothing with it. I called for the introduction of a new coercive control offence. I called for laws to empower police to issue domestic violence orders on the spot. I called for a rollout of GPS linked personal safety alarms to warn victims when a violent former partner is approaching their location. I called for \$2 million for frontline not-for-profit agencies, including an extra \$1 million for the Women's Legal Service. I also called for emergency grants of up to \$2,000 to help women flee dangerous homes. We know, member for Pumicestone, that none of that has happened under this Palaszczuk government.

I stand here today in support of this bill that has been coming for a very long time, since the Newman government initiated the *Not now, not ever* report—one of the most comprehensive reports into domestic violence. We know that close to 400 recommendations have been handed to the Palaszczuk government to prevent DV and improve responses to the community.

I am also concerned about the findings of the Queensland Audit Office report *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence*. This report, released in November last year, found that the government does very little assessment and evaluation of DV measures, meaning it often does not know what is working and what more resources are needed. The report notes—

- a lack of services in some regional areas (according to the police we spoke with). People in those areas are not referred. Due to limited data, we were unable to identify the level of services and referrals for each police region or district. The QPS and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General have not identified where additional services are most needed.

Whilst I support this bill before the House, it is a very important first step into the difficult law changes around coercive control. I do understand that we need to make sure that we get this right, but it is important that we do not delay the further changes anymore. I note that this horrendous form of domestic violence that is coercive control needs to be addressed, because many of those victims live in silence. They are in fear of their lives and quite often they cannot leave because there is nowhere for them to go. Whilst the minister is still in the House, I call on him to revisit his decision around the Chester Street house in Nanango.