




Speech By
Hon. Di Farmer

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

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

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (4.15 pm): I rise to speak to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, and it is with a great sense of moment that I do so. The Attorney-General referred to this bill earlier as an 'historic moment', and it is. Not only because it is just so important to victims of coercive control and their loved ones, but also because this parliament—this government—has gone further than most other parliaments in the world to address the issue of coercive control.

We are determined to make it work, and it is tricky. It is tricky to make it work and to not put victims at potential disadvantage. It is tricky to be sure that cases of coercive control will stand up in court, which is why the work of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce has been so important. I congratulate the Premier and the Attorney-General for making that referral. I think every member in this House would agree that the work of the task force has been outstanding—although after hearing the contributions of the LNP I am not sure about those opposite.

The statistics on domestic and family violence are shocking. The most recent Our Watch statistics tell us that, on average, one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner and that one in three women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15—and they are only the ones who have been reported. One in four women has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner since the age of 15 and, again, that is only what has been reported.

In this state, this government and this Premier have a long track record of taking leadership on domestic and family violence. She was the first premier to introduce paid domestic and family violence leave for the public sector. She was the first premier to call for a national approach on addressing domestic and family violence, and the very first national domestic and family violence summit was held in Queensland at the Premier's instigation. It was our Premier who committed to implementing the 140 recommendations of the *Not now, not ever* report that was delivered by Dame Quentin Bryce and funded it to the tune of over \$300 million. In fact, I believe it was close to \$600 million by the time all of the recommendations had been implemented. It is this government that has committed over \$1.3 billion since 2015 to work against domestic and family violence, including \$363 million to implement the recommendations of the first report of the task force.

As we speak of this bill, the story that is at the front of our minds is the horrific story of Hannah Clarke and her beautiful babies Aaliyah, Laianah and Trey. It was a story that shocked everyone and made us sick to our stomachs and, of course, none more so than her family and particularly her parents Sue and Lloyd. Sunday was the third anniversary of that terrible day and we all felt for Sue and Lloyd on that day, as we do every day, but anniversaries are just that bit tougher. Out of that horror, we saw

those brave people decide that they were going to make sure that Hannah's life and her babies lives would matter. The work that they do through Small Steps 4 Hannah is outstanding, and it makes such an impact. We have seen them spend every single day doing everything that they can to stop the same thing from happening to others. This legislation that we are now debating does them proud.

That horror was possibly the first time that coercive control was given a name in the broader community. On hearing the pattern of behaviour that had been perpetrated against Hannah—the control, the isolation from friends and family, the intimidation, the gaslighting and so much else—people started saying, 'What they are talking about happens to me—that is actually wrong, that is domestic violence.' To hear the story of Hannah's life and death and to know that it was in a suburb—for my community—just a couple of suburbs away. It was a suburb that any of us could live in and to hear about their everyday life, on the surface it being just like any of our lives—it could happen to anyone, regardless of age, education, job, where they live, or any other factor. It was so important that domestic violence victims were empowered.

In fact, as the domestic violence minister when I was talking constantly about domestic violence I would have people saying to me before that day, 'That wouldn't happen in your patch, Di, because it's an affluent community with high levels of education generally,' as if that somehow inoculated people. After February 2020, I did not hear that comment so much. Although that concept was new for so many, I always remember talking to Vanessa Fowler, who is co-chair of the Premier's DV task force, head of the Allison Baden-Clay Foundation and sister of Alison, and her saying to me that if she and her family had known then what they know now about coercive control—the isolation, the put-downs, the control and so much else that was distressing to them—they would have acted differently, and there are so many thousands of similar stories. However, for the stakeholders who have been working with domestic violence for so long, it unfortunately was not a new concept at all. They knew it and they know it too well and they have known it for too many years.

Coercive control is a pattern of deliberate behaviours perpetrated against a person to create a climate of fear, isolation, intimidation and humiliation. It robs an individual of their identity, independence and ability to seek help. There are stories of women who had no access to their own bank accounts, including to money they had earned themselves, women who are controlled with what they were allowed to wear out, what friends or family they are allowed to see or visit or, more concerning, who they were allowed to contact. The list just goes on and all of that can be done without physical contact. I want to thank all of the stakeholders who do this work. It is gut-wrenching and they are tireless and dedicated in what they do. They are literally helping to put people back together again. The work that they did with this task force in supporting people to come forward and tell their stories was absolutely amazing.

After Hannah and her babies were killed, there were cries across the state for coercive control legislation to be put in place straightaway. People justifiably wanted action, and they wanted it straightaway. However, we in government knew that if we did this we had to do it right. We knew that coercive control laws were in place in only a few jurisdictions across the world, that they were not all proven to be effective and that there was a real risk for misidentification of the primary aggressor in the experience of First Nations women and girls and for many women to be disadvantaged if the offence was not dealt with appropriately. We knew how hard it was to establish a pattern of behaviour, which is what coercive control is about, and how hard it is for anyone to identify, including police, and how hard it is to establish for the courts. This government committed to doing it properly, and that is what is happening right now. It is why this bill is a precursor to the actual legislation making coercive control an offence. The first report of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce by the Hon. Margaret McMurdo AC titled *Hear her voice* reviewed the need for a specific offence and found that simply making it an offence is not enough. They made that first lot of important recommendations for reforms to domestic and family violence service and justice systems that there be a standalone offence but that system-wide reform was needed first to ensure sufficient services and supports were in place.

I want to thank all of those brave people who came forward to say it out loud, and for them to relive those experiences was incredibly strong and incredibly brave. They are part of what is going to make a difference for other victims and survivors coming after them and we are absolutely linked to them in what we do today. I want to thank the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee. It must have been very traumatic to run that inquiry and to hear all of those stories. Even when you know about it in theory, to hear people speak of it and to read the evidence must have been very challenging and I want to thank them for their excellent work. The other important aspects of this bill are obviously the amendments around modernising and strengthening the offence of unlawful stalking and the particular work around sexual offence terminology. I want to acknowledge Grace Tame. I had several great conversations with her. I know this issue around replacing the term 'carnal knowledge' and an offence called 'maintaining a sexual relationship with a child', as if the child has somehow chosen it, is just so important.

I have to finish by saying how appalled I am by the LNP contributions today. They have literally, as always, never let the facts get in the way of a good story. This is really important legislation. It is time to honour the victims. It is time to honour the stakeholders and all of the people who submitted—the many hundreds and thousands of people who submitted. They did so and this is a reflection of their work. I commend the bill to the House.