




Speech By  
**Jim McDonald**

**MEMBER FOR LOCKYER**

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

 **Mr McDonald** (Lockyer—LNP) (5.19 pm): I rise to speak on the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I do so with a heavy heart, knowing the sadness that has happened across Queensland over many, many years. In my experience as a police officer and as officer in charge from 2004, I oversaw many of these cases. As others in this House have said, there have been many changes to legislation. I was a serving police officer when there was not any domestic violence legislation and police had to use other means available to them. As a community, we have matured and there are tools and resources in place that can help women and children remain safe.

As others have said, this is a complex policy area. One of the things that many of the submitters grappled with was the definitions and coming to a consistent approach on them. I commend the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee for their inquiry and the work they did. I pay particular tribute to the members for Currumbin and Scenic Rim for their statement of reservations. I also appreciate the guidance from the shadow minister for her significant work in this space and in other inquiries, as well as from the member for Mudgeeraba who regularly speaks in a heartfelt way for domestic violence survivors and victims.

With the time I have remaining, I want to give a personal insight to a family that I grew up with and share the words of my father that he would wish to friends and family when they would visit us at home. They were simple words: be kind to each other. I find myself now wishing the same to other family and friends when they come and visit. If everyone in the world was kind to each other, we would not need this legislation. I am very fortunate to have grown up in a household where there was such great respect for mothers, grandmothers and sisters, but many in the domestic violence space are vulnerable people who do not have that love and support and do not have that set of values. Unfortunately, we need this coercive control and other domestic violence legislation.

I want to take the time to give a shout-out to our Queensland Police Service for the work they do in combating domestic violence. In Lockyer we have hardworking police officers in Gatton, Helidon, Laidley and Lowood. The work they do is very significant, and it is also supported by the Domestic Violence Action Centre out of Ipswich. They not only support victims of violence but provide some assistance to prepare for when an offender comes out of jail and goes back into the community and poses a high-risk threat to those people. As we heard through the inquiry, many of those high-risk domestic violence situations started off with coercive control, a much less standard of domestic violence.

I note the Queensland Police Union's submission to the inquiry and their demand for additional resources. Their calculations based on the hours required for police officers to attend to this legislation means we need an extra 500 officers. I have spoken on that in this place before. From the reports submitted by this government to the Australian Bureau of Statistics from 2015 to 2021, we were already

265 police down based on the number of police per 100,000 people in Queensland back in 2015. We are well and truly starting behind the eight ball. I recognise that the police minister was trying to assure the House earlier that additional resources will be provided, and I know there will be, but I doubt whether it will be sufficient. It is for that reason that I welcome the changes in this bill to methods of service so the police will be able to serve things in a much more streamlined fashion. However, that will not be sufficient to overcome the resourcing needs.

As I said before, this is complex legislation so the police who are investigating this will find it complex to examine and uncover a sustained pattern of events. It will not only be the initial investigating police; there will also be a higher workload for forensic electronic experts in the Police Service to uncover and get the evidence. That is not even talking about the need for those officers to then go to court. I stress to the government that more work and more changes need to occur to assist police in the serving of documents and also managing the civil process they find themselves in in a domestic violence matter. Until it gets to a breach of domestic violence and the criminal offence occurs, while we are dealing with orders it is a full civil process.

I know the frustration that sworn police experience when they attend a domestic violence location. They conduct an investigation and they gather evidence on body worn cameras or through other means. They have the evidence of domestic violence but they then have to go through a whole process of applying to a court through a civil process, which takes them hours. I encourage members in this House to approach their police and get to understand that whole civil process because it takes them hours. If the government were serious, they would make changes similar to other states in Australia, particularly Tasmania, where officers can actually put orders in place straightaway under certain circumstances. I look forward to further policy development with regard to that.

With those sorts of changes, the police could get the evidence and within a few minutes put an order in place at the scene and actually have the job done so they are ready to go on to other offences. As we hear in budget estimates and as I have spoken about in this place many times before, the number of discretionary offences that police are able to get to has dropped significantly over the last number of years. That is simply because there are not enough police and they are expanding their range of work on other matters. They are important matters like this but they do not have the necessary resources. I appreciate there will be some extra resources for the police but it will not be enough.

As I mentioned before, the work of our police is outstanding. I have to give a shout-out to the Laidley Community Centre and the Lockyer Community Centre for the work they do in supporting vulnerable people who are subject to domestic violence. I mentioned before the wonderful work of the Domestic Violence Action Centre out at Ipswich. The department of housing and crisis care in Laidley is another area that provides emergency accommodation for some victims of domestic violence in my community. They are vital services, but again they simply do not have enough resources to cater to all of the needs.

I note the delay in bringing this important legislation into the House. I can finally say thank you on behalf of all of the victims who have suffered coercive control because at least this is progressing and we have finally got to this point. I would also like to stress in closing that this is not going to be an easy matter to address.

The government must put in place simple policies so that people, the police and the courts can understand it, because at the moment it is becoming more and more complex. With a little bit of simplicity and additional resources, then many more in our community will be kept safe. Finally in closing, be kind to each other.

Debate, on motion of Mr McDonald, adjourned.