




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (2.40 pm): The Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is a commitment of the Palaszczuk government to prevent domestic and family violence from occurring in our community and I rise to speak in support of the bill.

I was a little perplexed by the member for South Brisbane's bashing of the Police Service. After listening to the experiences of the member for Macalister and knowing the great work the Police Service has done, we cannot condemn the whole of the Police Service and say that we are not going to fund it because of one report. There are a lot of good people in the Police Service who are out there day after day looking after Queensland families and our citizens. The police in my area do a sterling job.

All women and children deserve to be safe in their homes and on our streets. That is something we all agree on. I have a wish and that is that I never need to get another email alerting me to a red rose rally to remember the life of a woman or child taken due to domestic violence. This must stop. Too many lives have been cowardly and brutally taken. Society is standing up and saying no more. Perpetrators who are not listening and not getting the message need to listen up now. We have had enough.

I have had conversations with women who have successfully sought orders against their partners only to have their partner's mates drive past their home and yell abuse at them on their mate's behalf. How do our young men get to a position where abusing women on behalf of their mates is a cool thing to do? This needs to stop.

I have met with women who are desperate to break out of a cycle of domestic violence. They witnessed and experienced violence in their family homes as young girls growing up. When choosing their partners they confuse the attention given to them as love but it is coercive behaviour that then turns into violence. This leads them to trying to protect their children from their partner's insidious behaviours, only to then watch their adult children become perpetrators or victims of domestic violence. They lived through a period when what happened behind closed doors was family business. They know that now they have a voice and they want to back in changes to the law to break the violent cycle that they have lived through and have not been able to shield their children from.

As the member for Toohey said in his contribution, we need men to step up and to call out domestic violence. Domestic violence has to be everyone's business if we are going to stamp it out of our society. It was an election commitment of the Palaszczuk government to legislate against coercive control. Coercive control is a pattern of deliberate behaviour perpetrated against a person to create fear, isolation, intimidation and humiliation. It robs a person of their identity, independence and ability to seek help. This behaviour is sneaky and cruel. It can be done without making physical contact, without leaving visible marks. It makes it very hard for a victim to explain.

The Palaszczuk government established the independent Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce which brought together experts from various fields related to domestic and family violence and was led by the Hon. Margaret McMurdo. In its first report, *Hear her voice*, the task force examined coercive control and reviewed the need for a specific offence. The task force heard from victims describing the scary, exhausting and debilitating emotional harmful effects coercive control has had on them.

To ensure the court system is not used as a tool by perpetrators to harass their partners, this bill will require applications and cross-applications to be heard together, require the court to consider whether to make arrangements for the safety, protection or wellbeing of a person most in need of protection, require the court to identify the person most in need of protection in the context of a relationship as a whole and only allow the court to make one order unless there is exceptional circumstances. Magistrates are also given guidance in this bill to assist in determining the person most in need of protection. This assistance comes as a suggestion from stakeholders.

I am pleased that unlawful stalking in this bill is being upgraded, modernised and strengthened. Stalking is used to intimidate and control a partner within and outside the relationship. Perpetrators are using electronic devices and surveillance to facilitate their abuse, including social media, spyware and tracking devices. To assist the police to make better use of unlawful stalking laws, the law is renamed 'unlawful stalking, intimidation, harassment or other abuse'. This bill broadens the type of conduct which may be captured by the offence to better reflect the way the offender may use technology to facilitate unlawful conduct. The amendments to unlawful stalking include new circumstances of aggravation which will apply where there exists or has existed a domestic relationship between the offender and the stalked person, with a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment. To ensure that the court has full information when making a decision, the police will be required to provide a copy of the respondent's criminal history and domestic violence history to the court in all proceedings in private and police initiated applications to assess the risk posed to the aggrieved and assist the court in best tailoring conditions to keep the victim safe.

My community recently recognised the 10-year anniversary of the brutal murder of Shandee Blackburn at Harrup Park. This is where she worked. I put on record the brave and dignified way that Shandee's mother, Vicki Blackburn, has kept Shandee's case front and centre to ensure there is justice for Shandee. The community was in unison that there is no room for domestic or any other violence in our community. I commend the bill to the House.