




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (4.50 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which continues the Palaszczuk government's commitment to acting on and preventing domestic and family violence across Queensland communities. Domestic and family violence is a scourge that still inflicts terrible tragedy and pain in far too many communities. This bill follows the *Hear her voice* report produced by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. After very careful and considered work and consultation under Her Honour Justice Margaret McMurdo, that report made 89 recommendations. Those 89 recommendations involved strengthening practical responses to respond to coercive control and domestic and family violence. The bill before the House seeks to give effect to recommendations 52 to 60 and 63 to 66 of the *Hear her voice* report. It includes immediate reforms that address the issue of coercive control.

Coercive control is a pattern of behaviour that can create a climate of fear, isolation, intimidation and humiliation that robs the victim of their identity, independence and ability to seek help. Coercive control deliberately isolates and disempowers. It is awful. It can be hard to detect. It is reprehensible. It can be hard to report and it can be hard to establish protection from; however, this bill will go a long way in addressing that. Coercive control can be exerted without any physical contact whatsoever. That is why we continue to listen to people who are survivors and who have experienced or are experiencing coercive control. We listen to them and to their stories. That has informed the bill that is currently before this House. That is why we are making these amendments: to protect and support them.

The bill contains amendments to the Criminal Code, the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act, the Evidence Act and the Penalties and Sentences Act alongside the Youth Justice Act. All combat coercive control by strengthening our current response and laying the groundwork to criminalise coercive control. We are also committed to introducing a second stage of legislative reform that will include coercive control offences. The bill amends the definitions of domestic violence, emotional or psychological abuse and economic abuse in the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act to include reference to a pattern of behaviour. In particular, the definition of 'domestic violence' is amended to make it clear that domestic violence includes behaviour that occurs over a period of time and includes individual acts that, when considered cumulatively, are abusive, threatening or coercive or cause fear.

The bill also widens the scope of conduct that constitutes unlawful stalking, intimidation, harassment or abuse. These reforms mean it will include contact in any way using any technology over any distance. In that way, it not only modernises our legislative framework in our ability to respond to these heinous acts and these offences but also updates our framework in line with the technologies and practices in society now. Telephone, mail, fax, SMS, email, an app on a computer or phone, online or via a social media network will all be examples.

It will also be illegal to monitor, track or surveil a person's movement without consent, also taking into account the technologies that exist today. This can include tracking devices and drones and checking the recorded history on someone's digital device such as a phone—reading SMSs and emails. Importantly, this bill seeks to make illegal the practice known as doxxing: threatening, humiliating or abusive acts such as publishing personal information online. The bill introduces a new circumstance of aggravation with up to seven years imprisonment for unlawful stalking, intimidation, harassment or abuse if a domestic relationship exists between the offender and the victim.

Today we announced an extra \$18.6 million in Legal Aid funding to help ensure that victims of domestic and family violence are not further targeted by their perpetrators in court. It means that a trained lawyer will conduct cross-examinations as we continue to build a justice framework that better supports victims of domestic and family violence. It will be backed by amendments to the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Act to require applications and cross-applications for protection orders to be heard together and additional amendments to allow the courts to award costs against an applicant if the court dismisses an application and determines that the applicant intentionally engaged in the behaviour or continued pattern of behaviour that is domestic violence towards the respondent.

In supporting this bill I want to acknowledge the wonderful work—the essential work—of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce along with the ongoing advocacy of Sue and Lloyd Clarke. On Sunday we marked the third anniversary of their unimaginable loss as we remembered Hannah and her three beautiful children, Trey, Laianah and Aaliyah. The HALT campaign and 19 days of Handstands continue to raise awareness of domestic and family violence, particularly around the area of coercive control. To Sue, Lloyd and all of their supporters: thank you for your continued commitment to Small Steps 4 Hannah and all that it stands for and accomplishes.

Locally, people across Ipswich are supported by a number of organisations including the Domestic Violence Action Centre along with other community groups and not-for-profits. I sincerely thank all these workers and volunteers for their ongoing care and compassion at a time when people are vulnerable and they need it most. They are changing lives each and every day for the better.

As I said, domestic violence is a terrible scourge in our communities. It leaves the tragedy and misery of innocent people in its wake. Recently, our local community has been deeply impacted by a domestic violence related horrific tragedy that has shocked our community to its core. I am mindful of the standing orders and sub judice and I will not say anything more until it is appropriate in the future.

In conclusion, we all have a role to play in the elimination of domestic and family violence. Today, through this bill and these reforms, we are taking significant steps to support people across our state who are at risk of family and domestic violence, and I commend the bill to the House.