




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (3.56 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Before I go any further, I want to acknowledge all of those people who have had lived experience in this House and across Queensland who have contributed to ensuring that this legislation has been designed in a way to address those very issues. It takes a lot to tell your story. It takes a lot to hear the story. You may not have been able to tell your own personal experiences, but when you hear other people's recount of theirs, it does trigger in yourself the feelings of those moments in your life. I do want to acknowledge all of those people.

For me personally, having been a victim of domestic violence, having experienced coercive control as an adult, I know exactly those feelings. Your world becomes very small when you are the victim of coercive control. Every part of your life is under control, whether it is the 17 phone calls a day that you get, the asking where you are every minute, who you are talking to, what are you wearing—all of these things. I do want to acknowledge all of those people who have had those similar experiences, and acknowledge that I know that this is a lot to take in, but this is important work and hopefully it is work that will ensure that others will be protected if they are having those experiences.

This bill will strengthen Queensland's current response to coercive control by making amendments to the Criminal Code, the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012, the Evidence Act 1977, the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992 and the Youth Justice Act 1992. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, led by the Hon. Margaret McMurdo, tabled its first report, the *Hear her voice* report, on 2 December 2021. The task force found we need to do more to respond to incidents of domestic and family violence and address coercive control. That is why the Palaszczuk government is proud to deliver amendments to modernise and strengthen the definition of 'stalking' in the Criminal Code and broaden the definition of 'domestic and family violence' to refer to 'a pattern of behaviour'. Further, we will strengthen the court's response to cross-application for protection orders to ensure the person most at risk is being protected, and strengthen the court's consideration of domestic violence history.

These amendments reinforce the Palaszczuk government's commitment to the prevention of domestic and family violence. We were very proud late last year to release our fourth action plan of the domestic and family violence strategy since we came to government in 2015. Under the fourth action plan the focus will be on addressing the critical issue of coercive control with reforms working to: increase awareness and appropriate responses to all forms of domestic and family violence; prioritise culturally safe and trauma informed responses to keep people safe at all stages of their life and in key settings; ensure domestic and family violence responses are integrated, connected, accessible and client centred; deliver initiatives that actively address perpetrating behaviours and increase perpetrator

accountability; and an increased intersectional approach to responding to domestic and family violence including with sexual violence. We know that cultural change requires a long-term commitment from everyone across Queensland to effect genuine change in our society and our behaviours. This includes working across government to protect all Queenslanders. We have committed to further training specifically looking at cultural support for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and how we can better support victim-survivors throughout the process.

The Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy has a particular role to play in the prevention of domestic and family violence. We have enhanced frontline service responses for women and families experiencing domestic and family violence through an investment of \$20 million over four years from 2021-22. We have also delivered four new, one extended and five replacement crisis shelter assets for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. We understand that women and children impacted by domestic and family violence are often in unsafe or unstable housing situations. That is why I work very closely with my colleague the Attorney-General and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence on our housing and domestic and family violence round table. Last year in South Brisbane I announced that the government will deliver a brand new, purpose-built complex for families with young children who have been experiencing or are at risk of homelessness. The 18-unit housing plus support complex, which includes additional space for support services, will provide stable homes for local families at a time when Queenslanders need it most.

The Palaszczuk government is strengthening our services to keep women safe and provide long-term stable and affordable housing options now and into the future. We know there is a connection between victims of domestic and family violence and an increased risk of homelessness. People fleeing domestic and family violence may find themselves at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness or in need of support services offered by special homelessness services, housing service centres, and neighbourhood and community centres. Through our funding for specialist homelessness services and housing services we are ensuring those at risk have a roof over their head and access to appropriate supports regardless of their situation. Our neighbourhood and community centre also provide vital services for people escaping domestic and family violence.

We have also announced the landmark Communities 2032 Strategy. One of the actions contained in the strategy's action plan is to strengthen the prevention of, and response to, domestic, family and sexual violence in Queensland. The communities area of my department also provides funding for a range of initiatives which support communities and individuals to live safe, happy, fulfilled and prosperous lives. While the department does not fund specialist DFV initiatives, many of our funded services do support people who have experienced DFV. Through our government's important initiatives such as financial resilience, neighbourhood and community centres, and community connect workers, individuals are able to seek support and connection to specialised services through a universal access pathway.

It is vital that in all the work we do we put First Nations first. The proposed bill will support the safety and wellbeing of First Nations peoples if passed. This issue is one that disproportionately affects First Nations people who are also over-represented in DFV cases. The bill includes provisions to accurately identify the person most in need of protection. This amendment will go a long way to address the cultural bias against First Nations women, often labelled as perpetrators. It is reported that 50 per cent of First Nations women who have been murdered by an intimate partner have been considered perpetrators of domestic and family violence. These provisions will protect and support all Queenslanders who are victims of DFV with a specific focus on First Nations peoples.

I want to again thank those who have advocated for this important change, including Hannah Clarke's parents, Sue and Lloyd, who have been incredible advocates for reform; and of course the many First Nations men and women, families and elders who have done exactly the same thing across our state: advocated incredibly hard to ensure these changes take effect. I want to acknowledge the Attorney-General for her commitment to consulting widely and engaging with those who have had lived experience. I want to thank also the women's safety sector and women's legal services who have supported the complex consideration which has led to this bill before the House today. Again I thank victim-survivors of DFV, particularly those who have experienced coercive control, for providing their insights and lived experience. As a state we have recognised we need to do better, and with this bill we will be working across government, the private sector and the community to protect Queenslanders.

Labor governments make a difference in the lives of all Queenslanders. We have delivered progressive reform across government since the election of the Palaszczuk government in 2015. Legislative change is just one part of a broader cultural change to protect the most vulnerable in our society. We must continue to: condemn violent behaviour, model respectful behaviours and support victims of abuse. We must make it clear we will not tolerate the behaviour of anyone who hurts another person within a relationship of intimacy and trust.

I am very pleased to be a member of this government that is delivering these vital reforms to protect vulnerable Queenslanders. By criminalising coercive control, we will create a safer state for all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.