




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (5.10 pm): There are moments in time when we stand in this House and move pieces of legislation that are fundamental to the benefit of Queenslanders. This is one of those momentous moments when we as parliamentarians demonstrate today in a bipartisan way what is good for Queenslanders. Unfortunately, I can speak from personal experience about something that happened to someone very close to me and why this legislation is so important. I will try and compose myself, but it is difficult.

I want to commend the Attorney-General for bringing this legislation to this House. This is a momentous occasion not only for this parliament but this government and myself personally. I also want to thank the members of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee for their work on the bill, including the chair, the member for Toohey. This bill will rename, modernise and strengthen the offence of unlawful stalking in the Criminal Code. With this bill the Palaszczuk government is tackling insidious nonphysical forms of domestic and family violence. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report made significant recommendations to prevent coercive control. That report was called *Hear her voice*. I read some of the voices in that report, and they are consistent with what I had to deal with as a father when one of my daughters had to deal with this insidious behaviour. I hope no-one ever has to go through that, because you have a situation where you grapple day-to-day with love and care for your families and you would never want to see that experienced by anyone else ever again.

The Palaszczuk government has certainly been listening and we have 'heard her voice'. I know these reforms are important to the people of my electorate, Ferny Grove. Domestic and family violence is a scourge on every community. That is clear when I speak to families and local police and it is clear from my own family's experience as well. While the organisation is no longer around, I still wear my white ribbon badge with pride because something that I fundamentally believe in is defending those people who are dealing with domestic and family violence and coercive control perpetrated by insidious males. I will not call them men; they are not men. Anyone who commits an offence against a woman—and males on most occasions are the perpetrators—is not a man. It is vital for men to speak up about the dangers of domestic and family violence as well, and that is what I do on many occasions. We should all be ambassadors when it comes to the safety of members of our community. So many victims of coercive control suffer in silence, and that is precisely what we cannot allow. We must make our voices heard across the entire Queensland community. Domestic and family violence is unacceptable in all of its forms. We must do everything in our power to protect women and their families.

Coercive control can happen to anyone, but the statistics and the stories do not lie: women and families suffer the most. This bill will remove grey areas in the act with regard to what coercive and controlling behaviours are. This bill will make it crystal clear so that the patterns of behaviour that constitute coercive control are correctly identified. These behaviours include things like: reading texts,

harassing phone calls, controlling finances—patterns of behaviour that seek to take away a partner's rights. These amendments will enshrine in law the association between stalking and domestic and family violence. They will ensure that the maximum penalty for stalking in the context of a domestic relationship is increased. Unlawful stalking, intimidation, harassment or abuse will now carry a greater maximum sentence of seven years if a domestic relationship exists between the offender and victim. Likewise, the maximum penalty for contravening a restraining order will go up to three years. These vital amendments are further demonstrations of the Palaszczuk government's steadfast commitment to communities. We will make sure that convicted domestic abusers can be put behind bars for longer.

In the short time I have left I want to concentrate on my personal experiences with regard to this matter. It relates back to a time when I was a union official and I had to deal with the disturbing behaviour of a particular male supervisor who preyed on two young women in the workplace. In fact, it was a workplace up in Toowoomba where they approached the union office. Despite the fact that the women were only asking for a bit of assurance and an apology from the perpetrator, the matter ended up going through the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission. We achieved a reasonable compromise and outcome and some compensation for the women. It was good for the employer to recognise that it was not behaviour that was steadfast in the view of the company, and in the long run they dismissed the perpetrator. That certainly was not the outcome we were looking for but it was probably the right step in terms of that particular person.

The other matter concerns behaviour that my daughter had to deal with, and many things in this bill will address that. In that particular case her boyfriend affected her overall outlook on life and reduced her overall confidence in life. She had many friends in school, but the only person left was him. He told her what to wear in public. 'What's on your phone?' 'You're not going out tonight dressed like that.' 'Show me your phone; I want to see those text messages.' This is the sort of behaviour that is being recognised in the bill, and it has to come to an end because that sort of behaviour should not be accepted anywhere in society. This bill will address that behaviour.

That led to me becoming a white ribbon ambassador, which I did in 2008 upon entering the Senate. I have proudly continued the objectives and vision that the white ribbon and many of the other organisations that wish to eliminate domestic and family violence stand for. I want to commend the men and women in DAF with regard to their commitment to the white ribbon group and two people in particular, Wayne and Annette Hall. Just last week on Valentine's Day we conducted an online raffle. We raffled prizes that our stakeholders in agriculture provided to raise funds for a Western Queensland refuge. We will continue doing that, and it is important that it continues. I encourage everyone to get behind not only supporting this bill but also supporting people in your communities to battle the scourge of domestic and family violence. If you recall, two years ago myself, Ron Goodman and a number of other people in my office, including my director-general and Wayne, shaved our heads and raised \$68,000. Many of our stakeholders came along and had the joy of taking the shears to our heads to raise money for—

Mr Butcher interjected.

Mr FURNER: I will take that interjection. I am pleased it grew back. I knew it was going to grow back, but I also know that the scars of women who have had to deal with domestic and family violence will never heal. Those scars continue throughout their lives and the relationships they have, and that has been the outcome for my daughter. She is healing, but it is difficult when you see the effect such an insidious attack can have on an individual. I will never understand it because I have always believed in respecting the women in our lives. Everyone has a mother, some of us have wives, and if you are lucky some of us have daughters. It is very important that we respect the women in our lives and the women in our societies. This bill demonstrates our commitment as a parliament to rid our communities of this insidious disease. It is a wonderful display of bipartisan to stand in this chamber and see people supporting this bill. I commend this bill wholeheartedly to the House.