




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (12.44 pm): I rise also to speak in support of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I want to start my comments by talking about my father for a moment. Back in the seventies as a young child growing up in Southport I lived in a suburban street. Most of the families in our street were working-class families. There was one particular family in our street who had a few kids—three or four boys and a girl. There always seemed to be issues across the street. I recall on one occasion my father went and grabbed one of the other next-door neighbours and they decided they would go over and speak to the father of this household. One can well imagine how that conversation went because this was a household where there was significant domestic violence, where no doubt there were elements of coercive control. My father, a prisoner of war survivor from the Second World War, was not going to stand for it.

As a young child I recall thinking, 'Man, that was just such a gutsy thing to do,' as my father and the neighbour basically shirt-collared this fellow and said, 'If we ever hear any complaint from your family, if we ever see any evidence of you doing the wrong thing by your wife and your kids, we will come over here and we will deal with you.' Unfortunately, we do not live in a society anymore where that is perhaps accepted. It is sad that more and more of us in society are choosing to turn the other way. What is so important in this issue of domestic violence in respect of protecting our families and looking out for kids is that as a society all of us need to do more, all of us need to step up and take more notice of what is going on in our communities.

A year or so ago a report was presented to the Queensland parliament on social isolation and some of the challenges that individuals are facing all across our nation and our state. Sadly, it is that social isolation and many other issues where people are withdrawing, where they are cocooning in a sense—that was a trend that was talked about in the eighties when more and more people were bunkering down in their homes and building higher fences around their houses to protect themselves. Unfortunately, that also has some negative challenges: that makes it easier for people to hide.

As members of parliament we must stand up for women, but not just women because it is not just women who are victims of domestic violence. It is children; we must protect our kids. We need to provide policy and legislation that provides greater hope for our young people and encourages them. No doubt in the coming weeks there will be some interesting debate around some of the youth justice issues that are before the parliament and the need for more intervention and early intervention. We also need to encourage men to be like my dad—men of character and courage who are prepared to speak up and defend not just their own families but the dignity of all in our society.

I note also that one of the aims the bill is to update the terminology around sexual offences in the Criminal Code. I have had some interesting discussions with some of my colleagues, including the member for Whitsunday, about this particular issue. It is not just the parliament and the judiciary that

have a responsibility in this respect but also the media. Last year I had the pleasure of attending the QCOSS conference and one of the speakers was Grace Tame. I paused for a moment because I had seen all of the negative publicity about her disposition towards the Prime Minister and others. I have to be honest; I was not particularly looking forward to hearing Grace, but she was inspiring.

So much of what she had to say was supposed to be heard under Chatham House rules; there was a request that we not talk openly about her presentation. Essentially, what she said was that we need to call a spade a spade, that too often in the media we see a watering down of terminology—‘a student was in an inappropriate relationship with a teacher’ or a sporting club coach, and that is not at all what was happening. I note the Attorney-General’s comments yesterday. She said—

The amendments are intended only to modernise terminology. By replacing the term ‘carnal knowledge’ with ‘penile intercourse’ it is not intended to substantively alter the scope or operation of offences in the code.

The government has listened to the voices of brave victim-survivors ...

It is so important that we start calling rape, bullying or intimidation exactly what it is. It is such an important aspect of this bill, and I am pleased that this legislation seeks to deal with that as an issue.

There are so many different aspects of the legislation I could cover, but I want to acknowledge a few champions in our community. I publicly thank Rosemary O’Malley, or ‘Rosie’ as she is known, from the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre on the Gold Coast and wish her well in her retirement. She has been an incredible champion in relation to domestic and family violence on the Gold Coast, and she has led an incredible team of people. Her replacement, Lucy Gregory, whom I have not had the pleasure of meeting yet, has big shoes to fill but I am sure she will be equally as passionate about this cause.

I acknowledge the incredible work of Di Macleod and her ongoing commitment through the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence. It is interesting, because Di is no longer involved with the Macleod Accommodation Support Service, but it carries her name because she also established that many years ago. It would be remiss of me not to say thank you to Rosemary Larkin for her ongoing work—she has also retired after many years of faithful service—and to wish her replacement, Melanie Houghton, the new head of Macleod Accommodation Support Service on the coast, well in her future endeavours and the work she does in supporting women and families on the Gold Coast.

This is important legislation and we need to be far more diligent than we have been in the pursuit of the objects of this bill. It is some time since the *Not now, not ever* report was handed down in this parliament. There were commitments made then about the need for more crisis housing to support families. There were commitments made about the need for more publicity and more awareness in our society around the issues.

It is beholden on every one of us in this chamber to be champions for our community, to be champions for our families and to provide Queenslanders with the surety that they are living in a state where they can feel safe and valued. That should be the case for everyone regardless of where they have come from. Regardless of their ethnicity or their Indigenous background, all Queenslanders deserve to live with dignity and to know that the parliament, the services the Queensland government provides and the police will be on their side in those minutes and hours of need.