




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sexual Violence Awareness Month

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.03 am): Each October, Queensland marks Sexual Violence Awareness Month. A few weeks ago I was honoured to join Di Macleod and the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence to launch the month with the sector. More than 20 years on, Queensland is still the only state that has a month dedicated to raising awareness around sexual violence. The month allows us to reflect on the past, to provide support and change for our communities in the present and to envision a future free from the impacts of sexual violence.

We know that sexual assault remains under-reported in Australia. It can happen in public, private or institutional settings, carried out by people known to the victim or by strangers. Without a public discourse like Sexual Violence Awareness Month, the chance to provide victim-survivors with the support they need and hold perpetrators to account can be missed.

The Palaszczuk government is absolutely committed to doing everything we can, together with the dedicated and hardworking sexual violence service sector, to end sexual violence in our state and better support victims. This is reflected in our continued investment in sexual violence services and our reform agenda that addresses the sexual assault myths and stereotypes that continue to exist in our society. In the 2023-24 budget we committed over \$29 million to our specialist sexual assault services and women's health and wellbeing organisations to provide sexual violence support. Since 2015 we have increased funding to the sector by over 95 per cent.

Along with investment, our government continues to ensure our laws reflect the community's expectations of equality and mutual respect in relationships. Respect is so important. Earlier this month we saw the commencement of reforms that allow for alleged offenders of prescribed sexual offences, including rape, to be named prior to committal, except, importantly, where it could identify or lead to the identification of a victim. Now these accused will be treated just like any other defendant before the courts. It is vital that we bring these crimes out of the shadows. Responsible reporting of these cases is critical to achieving this outcome.

Last sitting week the Palaszczuk government introduced legislation to strengthen our sexual offence laws and provide additional protection for victim-survivors. Our government is committed to shifting the culture and beliefs that lead to violence against women. Everyone in society has a role to play. We must call out this behaviour wherever we see it. Whether it is in our workplace or amongst our friends or our neighbours, it cannot be accepted. We cannot turn a blind eye to this behaviour if we want to change the culture. As we continue to shine a light on sexual violence more victim-survivors will come forward. They will need support, they will need to be heard and, most importantly, they will need to be believed—and we believe them.