




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

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CRIMINAL LAW (COERCIVE CONTROL AND AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; CRIMINAL CODE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (DOUBLE JEOPARDY EXCEPTION AND SUBSEQUENT APPEALS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (11.35 am): I am proud to rise in support of the Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill debated in cognate with the Criminal Code and Other Legislation (Double Jeopardy Exception and Subsequent Appeals) Amendment Bill. Our commitment to the people of Queensland in 2020 was that we would make coercive control a standalone offence. Today we are seeking to deliver on that commitment and make changes to introduce affirmative consent, including the specific declaration of stealthing as an act committed without consent. It is significant that in Queensland Women's Week we are introducing these major reforms in support of women's safety and bodily autonomy. Our Miles Labor government is 100 per cent committed to acting to better protect the safety and rights of Queensland women and girls, who, statistics show, are much more likely to experience domestic and family violence, particularly coercive control, and, sadly, also much more likely to experience sexual assault. That said, all Queenslanders will benefit from the protections and reforms in these bills.

Many of the brave women who contributed their stories to our Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce asked for these changes, with the majority of submissions in support of the criminalisation of coercive control as a standalone offence. I pay tribute to all those victim-survivors and their families who have faced the unimaginable but still had the generosity to work towards better outcomes for future victims. I particularly acknowledge the victims and their families whose stories have not generated widespread media attention and public horror. Your pain is no less real for being less known.

Coercive control is at the heart of domestic and family violence, yet even for victim-survivors it can be difficult to recognise and even more difficult to describe. Perpetrators possess almost unlimited avenues they can use to control and coerce their partner, and that coercion may be no less effective for being subtle and covert. As researcher Lundy Bancroft said in his book *Why Does He Do That?: Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men*—

The scars from mental cruelty can be as deep and long-lasting as wounds from punches or slaps but are often not as obvious. In fact, even among women who have experienced violence from a partner, half or more report that the man's emotional abuse is what is causing them the greatest harm.

Even now victim-survivors are asked why they choose to stay with a perpetrator who treats them badly. Those attitudes ignore that coercive control routinely continues and escalates even once the victim is removed from the perpetrator's immediate circle of control after separation. One particularly cruel mode of coercion routinely used by perpetrators who have children with the targeted person is threatening to take away or restrict the target person's access to their children. Speaking as a parent, little could be more painful or frightening. At separation, perpetrators commonly shift into systems abuse, for example via unreasonable family law communications and proceedings inflicted for the

purpose of controlling the targeted person and causing them emotional distress and financial harm. Coercive control is a feature of almost every relationship that ends in a domestic and family violence murder, and for some victims of coercive control the first episode of physical violence that they experience is the episode that steals their life.

Some LNP speakers have expressed their grave concerns about the fairness of these changes to perpetrators. Personally, I am much more concerned about the fairness of the system overall as experienced by victim-survivors, most of whom are, of course, women. I again thank all victim-survivors and their families who have advocated to secure the generational change that these bills encompass. I acknowledge the ministers and attorneys-general who have listened and worked to deliver these important reforms, along with the committees that have examined them. I commend the bills to the House.