




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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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 HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (5.03 pm): I rise to speak in support of these cognate bills. We know that no-one is exempt from violence and, in particular, domestic and family violence. We also know that women and girls are grossly over-represented in the space of domestic and family violence. We know that an intrinsic part of domestic and family violence is coercive control. That is why today we are saying enough is enough and we are making coercive control a crime.

This legislation is another important milestone our government has made towards eradicating all forms of domestic and family violence and keeping Queensland women and girls safe. In recent months we have seen too many violent attacks on innocent victims such as Vyleen White in Redbank Plains. This government is strengthening community safety by boosting police numbers and banning the sale of knives and weapons to minors. We also know that community safety starts in the home.

Quite simply, victims of coercive control are victims of crime as well. Legislating against coercive control is an important step in recognising the seriousness of this offence and improving safety for victims. Coercive control is a pattern of abuse—that intimate partner terror that harms, punishes, isolates and frightens a victim. It often indicates a high risk of harm and lethality to current and former partners. Perpetrators use controlling behaviour to destroy a woman or girl's self-agency, her sense of safety and her ability to seek help.

I want to thank all of the brave victim-survivors who spoke of their experiences to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. Their truth has led us to where we are today. Some accounts from women in the *Hear her voice* report were harrowing. Some even spoke of not realising that what they were experiencing was coercive control. The DFV Prevention Council reiterated this in a statement they put out only recently—that the dynamics of violence and coercion are the same for every person, yet the lack of recognition of the experience makes it harder for some people to reach out for help.

Those who did find the courage to seek help found that support was lacking due to a lack of understanding in the community of what coercive control behaviours looked like or because physical abuse had not been present. Sadly, many victims said that they felt the justice system had let them down and that their reports to police were not being taken seriously. Legislating against coercive control will ensure that this behaviour is seen as a serious crime and it will allow more women and girls to be heard, believed and seen.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Hon. Margaret McMurdo AC for her leadership on the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce and the whole taskforce itself for their hard work in bringing victims' stories to light. I want to commend the minister for her work in this space as well. We are grateful to have such strong advocates here in Queensland who have done so much to create awareness in the

community of domestic and family violence and coercive control—advocates such as Sue and Lloyd Clarke, the parents of Hannah Clarke, and Vanessa Fowler, the sister of Allison Baden-Clay. They have done a tremendous amount of work to inform the public about domestic violence and coercive control through their own personal stories and advocacy. That advocacy is that much harder when it is so close to home.

We are grateful for the incredible work being done by DV support organisations in the community. I know in my electorate of Ipswich we are very fortunate to have the Domestic Violence Action Centre to help women get the support and advocacy they need. DVAC's CEO, Amie Carrington, is a wonderful advocate for women in general, and her hardworking team are working miracles every day to help women escape abusive relationships.

At the 2020 election we made a promise to make coercive control a crime and to deliver that promise within four years. I am very proud to stand here today alongside my colleagues to deliver on that promise. It shows that we are listening to Queensland women and giving them what they need to stay safe in their homes.

The LNP cannot be trusted to do the same. No matter what we hear from those opposite, we know that when they were in government they cut funding to NGOs. We heard the member for Bundaberg talk about those cuts. I mentioned our local organisation before—the Domestic Violence Action Centre. Their funding was cut by over \$50,000 when the LNP were in government. These are essential frontline services that women rely on. The LNP will take Queensland women and girls' causes backwards, and that is something that we cannot risk.

I also want to speak today about the double jeopardy exception and subsequent appeals bill. This bill reflects our government's ongoing commitment to ensure that Queensland's criminal justice system stays contemporary and efficient. I did want to mention this briefly.

Double jeopardy laws came into play in Ipswich just 51 years ago. The killer of Ipswich toddler Deidre Kennedy walked free after a second attempt to bring him to justice. The Queensland Supreme Court and the Australian High Court quashed his conviction based on the principle of double jeopardy. The community was—and still is—justifiably angry at what they perceive to be a gross miscarriage of justice. At the time, that murder shook our community due to the horrific, random nature of the killing and the callous disregard of the offender for such a young, innocent life. We had a beautiful commemorative service last year to mark the 50th anniversary of Deidre's murder. The decisions of the Supreme Court and the High Court clearly show that rigid adherence to double jeopardy rules risks perpetrating an injustice.

We know that the retrial of an offender is an extraordinary thing; however, when there is fresh and compelling evidence against an accused person it is in the interests of justice that it happen. This bill will strengthen our criminal justice system's response to wrongful convictions by introducing a right of subsequent appeal. We want Queenslanders to have confidence in our justice system, and that is why we are committed to strengthening our Criminal Code so that it meets community expectations. We have listened to women on coercive control. We have listened to community concerns about expanding double jeopardy exceptions. I commend the bills to the House.