




Speech By
Hon. Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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**DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. AJ CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (Minister for Families, Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (5.00 pm), in reply: I acknowledge and thank all honourable members for their contribution to the debate of this bill. We have heard a lot in this House over the last day and a half about the evidence of experts. Today outside the House we heard from victims and advocates, and I consider them experts in lived experience.

Hannah Clarke and her children were brutally murdered in an horrific domestic and family violence incident. Her parents, Sue and Lloyd, who have been visitors to this House for many years, have shown incredible courage to become advocates for victims of domestic and family violence. They stood with me and the Minister for Police this morning. Lloyd said—

We welcome these new laws coming in. We really think the trackers and the police protection directions will actually put the onus back on to the perpetrator and keep the victim safer. Hannah had a good experience with the Police, and if these laws would have been in then, hopefully her and her kids would have been saved.

Sue said—

The fact that the police can take out the protection order I think makes a huge difference. Hannah had it taken out of her hands and the police put the protection order out for her, and she felt safer. She felt, had she done it, her life would have been threatened much sooner. There's repercussions on the woman for taking out protection orders. When it's out of their hands, I think it works much safer, and we're thrilled to be here on such a landmark day.

Carolyn Robinson from BeyondDV works with victim-survivors of domestic and family violence every single day. She has a daughter who went through horrific acts of violence and knows how insidious it is in our communities. Today she joined us and said—

I work with victim-survivors every single day—hundreds of them. I think that these moves will be very welcome by victim-survivors. To know now, with the orders being able to be put in place immediately, it means we will be freeing up police so that they can come and support victims as soon as possible. It will make a difference, in my opinion. Knowing that the GPS trackers will be available for perpetrators ... also gives myself and others a great sense of comfort. I don't see any negatives with what we are doing with these measures.

Jess is a victim-survivor of domestic and family abuse. Her former partner has recently been jailed. She said—

After eight to 10 years of plain torture in my home, it's a very emotional day and all of this stuff is really exciting—really, really exciting. I see no negatives here. I see all positives. The trackers themselves will impact me greatly. When the perpetrator in my instance will be released on parole at some stage, he will hopefully be given one of these trackers, and I won't be having to look over my shoulder. The police protection orders take that vulnerability away from us. It takes it off our shoulders as victims ... you feel like you can't do that yourself, and they will blame you and put you in a much unsafer environment. Thank you. Thank you for the change and for hearing us. I feel very heard today as a victim-survivor.

We had our suspicions, but the last day and a half has confirmed it: the Labor Party does not trust the Queensland police. I have never seen a group of people denigrate the Queensland Police Service more than I have in the last day and a half. At the start of every single speech the Labor Party paid lip-service to the Queensland Police Service. They began their speeches by thanking them for

their hard work before proceeding to use the rest of their speech to say how terrible they are at performing their job policing domestic and family violence: they misidentify victims as offenders; they are not experts in the field of policing domestic and family violence.

Police are on the front line every single day. They are called to 500 domestic violence incidents every single day. Recognising their work, their efforts and their expertise does not take anything away from important frontline specialised domestic violence services which quite often deal with DV from nine to five, five days a week—not 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In fact, working together is the expectation of victims. It is the expectation of me as the minister. It is the expectation of this government and of all Queenslanders. The real risk right now is that police are not able to get to the next victim. I have heard that time and time again from the front line. To be very clear, the Labor Party stood up in this House quoting figures from a question on notice that said—

Will the Minister advise the number of respondents who identified as female in domestic and family violence matters, as a percentage of respondents (reported separately by year from 2022 to 2025)?

This is a broad question and I want to clarify the response, as those opposite have been quoting the figure that 30 per cent of respondents in DFV matters are women. What they did not say is that this includes more than just intimate partner domestic and family violence. It includes elder and carer abuse, family abuse between a mother and a daughter or a daughter and a son. The notes in the question also state—

Figures are not a unique respondent count. A respondent involved in multicultural domestic violence incidents will be counted multiple times.

If the opposition had asked a question about circumstances where the respondent and the aggrieved are in an intimate partner relationship, they would have known that only 11.36 per cent of the time is a female recorded as a respondent because both men and women at different times are named as respondents. It is not always 100 per cent men as respondents. On every one of those occasions there was a gender centred review of the case to ensure that officers had correctly identified the person most in need of protection. The latest figures show that 97 per cent of police protection notices have been upheld by the courts. This is the statistic those opposite should have been quoting—not slandered the hardworking men and women of our Queensland Police Service.

The member for Mundingburra, a former police officer herself, spoke from the heart in her speech today about the trauma of domestic and family violence she saw firsthand and the emotional toll it took on her as an officer. In her speech, unlike those opposite, she showed that she understands the policing role. She understands the impacts.

The safety of victim-survivors of domestic and family violence is central to our commitment as a government. That is why we are implementing comprehensive reforms in this bill. It provides for a range of new measures that will ensure victim-survivor safety and that we hold persons using violence to account. The bill is just one part of our reforms to ensure safety where Queenslanders live. To support the measures we are delivering more support for victim-survivors of family violence.

As I have already outlined in this House, the performance of DVConnect—which failed under those opposite—increased from 47 per cent in October 2024 under the former Labor government to 73 per cent in the April to June quarter. If those opposite do not think that a fully functioning 24/7 crisis line has an impact on policing pressures in this state, then they have been kidding themselves. They must have had their heads in the sand. This supports police in their work and the demand for services on the front line. This matters because victim-survivors rely on this important crisis service—as do specialised services and as does the Police Service. I have heard nothing but complaints over the last four years under the former Labor government.

Our new North Queensland DV crisis line will double the statewide capacity. We will continue to deliver innovation where we see the opportunity—like the rollout of the electronic monitoring devices. This pilot is enabled through key reforms in the bill and is supported through a partnership between my portfolio and the portfolios of the police minister, the Minister for Corrective Services and the Attorney-General—because on this side of the House we are prepared to collaborate, cooperate and work together in the interests of victims.

This government is also committed to meeting the needs of diverse groups of people experiencing domestic and family violence. That is why I have previously announced the funding of \$500,000 over two years to the Queer and Trans Workers Against Violence organisation to deliver a range of activities that will support workforce development including research, data collection and professional learning across communities, particularly in regional, rural and remote Queensland. These initiatives and many others come together in a 10-year DFV reform strategy that is currently under development. I look forward to engaging with the sector more broadly.

I will now address some of the issues raised in the debate with regard to PPDs. The bill establishes PPDs as an additional tool for addressing domestic and family violence. The PPN framework will still exist and will still be utilised where it is fit for purpose. This reform is about providing immediate protection to victims for 12 months without them needing to go through a court process. This is something that has been welcomed by many victim-survivors, which those opposite have neglected to recognise.

While consent is not required for a PPD to be issued, a police officer must consider the views or wishes expressed by the aggrieved about whether an application for a protection order should be made—that is, whether the matter should proceed to court. This is consistent with the existing tools for addressing domestic and family violence. It is not currently a requirement for police to gain an aggrieved person's consent before they issue a police protection notice or for an application for a domestic violence order to be made on behalf of a victim-survivor. Rather, any views or wishes expressed by the aggrieved must be considered in all decisions under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act. Requiring consent to issue a PPD runs the risk of victim-survivors being coerced into removing their consent to the PPD and losing vital protections. I find that absolutely ludicrous, frankly—I really do—particularly coming from those opposite who initially introduced coercive control. It makes no sense at all to me why they now want to move an amendment around consent.

There are two options for review following the issue of a PPD, as I outlined for the House during debate. A person will have the option to seek a review of a PPD through either a court review or a police review. Where a court review is sought, the court will treat the PPD as an application for a protection order and consider the matter afresh. The court then will be able to make any order available to them under part 3 of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act. It will also be able to order whether the PPD should end or be set aside.

The bill establishes several exclusions and safeguards to mitigate the risk of misidentification. I heard that from many opposite, and I also heard it referenced by specialised services in the committee process, but without data, evidence or numbers that they had quantified. I have consulted deeply and extensively across the state and I have read those submissions, and there is still not the adequate data. There is no data; it has not been presented. The police hold the data. The police have come a long way with their training and the way in which they deal with misidentification. We have to acknowledge that and thank the police for their efforts, because they do not want to get it wrong. They do not want perpetrators of domestic violence continuing their victimising.

Recent reforms to responses to DFV have prioritised the reduction of cross-orders and cross-applications. The principles of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act now provide that only one domestic violence order should apply between parties. The exclusion of cross-orders in the new PPD framework is consistent with this as well.

I note that the opposition proposes an amendment to the police review provisions in the bill to provide that a PPD must be reviewed in relation to any PPD that names a female as the respondent and a male as the aggrieved. This is a process that is not provided for in the bill but is something that happens currently and will continue to apply for PPDs. PPDs issued to female respondents will be subject to the Queensland Police Service's gender centred review process. This process includes review of these matters by domestic and family violence specialist officers to ensure that police actions accurately determine the person most in need of protection. There will also be review options available to a person who has issued a PPD, including either a police review or a court review.

I acknowledge the important work that ANROWS undertakes and the important findings of its report that those opposite were referring to. The ANROWS report refers to data from the 2016-17 Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board annual report that in 12 of the 27 cases considered by the board the adult female victims had been identified by police as a respondent in domestic and family violence related occurrences. That equated to the 44.4 per cent that those opposite were quoting. I note that the findings from this report are almost a decade old and do not reflect the work that has been undertaken in more recent years by the Queensland Police Service after the McMurdo taskforce, the commission of inquiry and the additional training that police have now installed as part of their processes. Queensland has come a long way in how we recognise and respond to domestic and family violence since that time, and I think it is important we note that for transparency.

I acknowledge the unique impacts that domestic and family violence has on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families, as well as the significant barriers they experience in seeking support and justice. I am confident in the safeguards included in the bill to exclude the use of PPDs in circumstances where police cannot identify the person most in need of protection, where there is child protection involvement or where family law matters are before the court. I have also placed on the record that I will be working closely with First Nations women in the establishment of a peak body.

With regard to the Family Responsibilities Commission, I foreshadow that I will be moving an amendment to the Family Responsibilities Commission Act. These amendments were developed in consultation with the commission and will support early intervention in a culturally safe environment.

I will talk about some of the concerns that opposition members raised about VREC. The members raised concerns with removing the requirement that a VREC statement must be taken by a trained police officer. This reform does not weaken the protection for victim-survivors; it makes it more accessible, more practical and better resourced across the state, particularly for those who come from CALD communities. Importantly, the Queensland Police Service is rolling out a comprehensive training package for frontline officers. Members also raised concerns that amendments to simplify a complainant's declaration of the truthfulness of their VREC statement will weaken its evidentiary value. The bill does no such thing. I understand that these amendments to VREC are not novel. They adopt a similar approach to that taken in both New South Wales and Victoria.

I would like to highlight that the amendments in the bill seek to avoid unnecessary repetition for victim-survivors, ensuring the framework is more accessible and more efficient. The bill maintains that a complainant is able to withdraw their consent to the making of the recording at any time while the recorded statement is being taken. A complainant can also withdraw their complaint to police at any time, and the complainant's wishes must be considered when the prosecution is determining whether to use a VREC statement in court. The amendments remove unnecessary barriers for victim-survivors and simplify and streamline the VREC framework so it can be accessed and assist victim-survivors of domestic and family violence throughout Queensland.

In concluding, I want to acknowledge and thank victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. As part of the victims working group that I have established to identify system gaps, I am committed to hearing their voices and implementing change. I am also committed to the statutory review in two years time and an evaluation that is contained in this bill. I want to thank the dedicated frontline workers in this sector—the Queensland Police Service, the specialised services and all of those volunteer community organisations. Many of those organisations have been mentioned in the House today, including those in my electorate—Whitsunday Counselling and Support, the Mackay Women's Centre and many other not-for-profits including Broken Ballerina. I also want to thank the dedicated public servants who helped facilitate workshops with the sector and in the establishment and drafting of this bill. I again thank members of this House for their contributions to this debate.

I want to finish my reply with acknowledging my mother, a victim-survivor. She was pleased, some 20 years ago, when her police officer, Daniel, took out an order for her. For over 20 years she lived in fear and terror, along with me and my three siblings, until the day my father took a knife to her throat, and it was the intervention by my little brother and the Queensland police who arrived in time that gave her the freedom and the courage to have a different life. I will always back the Queensland Police Service for their hard work in protecting victim-survivors. The Crisafulli government will always stand up for victims. I commend this bill to the House.