




Speech By
Bree James

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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

 **Ms JAMES** (Barron River—LNP) (12.01 pm): I rise today to make my contribution on the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. I want to first start by thanking Minister Camm for introducing this bill for Queenslanders and for victims of domestic and family violence.

Domestic violence is not a private matter; it is a national emergency. This bill is long overdue, and I am sure that as Queenslanders hear what it is about they will wonder why, just like I have, those opposite never took these steps in the last decade. They will wonder why the Labor Party protected perpetrators instead of victims. This bill is so important. It will stop putting domestic violence offenders' rights above the rights of victims. This bill is a step towards addressing what domestic violence victims and police are asking for, and those opposite continue to ignore them.

Victim safety is at the heart of these reforms. GPS trackers are to be placed on high-risk domestic violence offenders. The new police protection directions will be issued by police on the spot and last for 12 months to protect victim-survivors without needing court approval. In the past, for a protective order to be put in place victims would have to go to court, delaying this important step. It makes no sense that those opposite are opposed to this.

We will have 24/7 domestic and family violence crisis response support for victims of domestic violence and coercive control. This includes a new North Queensland-based hub by July 2026. An additional \$75.8 million over five years will contribute to the National Partnership Agreement for family, domestic and sexual violence responses, bringing our total funding available to \$151.6 million. For DV Safe Phones, there is funding of \$1 million to continue to collect, refurbish and distribute used mobile phones to victims of domestic violence.

One of the reasons I decided to run for parliament was the effect the youth crime crisis, which emerged from Labor's softening of the laws a decade ago, was having on our beautiful Far North Queensland region. The housing crisis was another reason. The number of families living in cars and seeking homes in our region is at a height we have never seen before due to Labor's lack of planning for growth in our state and all the red tape that has reduced productivity.

Another reason I decided to run is less spoken about—domestic violence. It is a disaster plaguing our region in Far North Queensland. Silence is the weapon that lets domestic violence thrive. I have people reaching out to my office regularly asking for help. I commend them for their bravery, and I thank the police, emergency services and support services that help victims fleeing from domestic violence.

The harrowing stories from our region are heartbreaking. A Cairns mum of three who was held face down on a table with a shotgun pressed to her throat broke her silence earlier this year. She was a survivor of a 13-year domestic violence relationship. Another mother was held at knifepoint by her ex in front of her kids. He then called her 114 times from prison, threatening to kill her. Another woman in our region, sadly, lost her life in a murder-suicide, and her daughter had to run to the neighbours for help. Sad stories like this are not uncommon in our region.

In Australia, domestic violence is disturbingly common. It is one of the main drivers of homelessness among women, children and men. Far North Queensland has a housing shortage and shelters and refuges are full, so many victims are not leaving unsafe homes. Many are stuck in a perpetual cycle that they find extremely difficult to escape from. Just because domestic violence is hidden does not mean it is not happening. It is one of the most widespread crimes in our nation. One in six women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner, while for men it is one in 16. Also, 75 per cent of victims of domestic violence reported the perpetrator as a male, while 25 per cent reported the perpetrator as a female. On average, one woman every nine days and one man every month is killed by a current or former partner. Domestic violence does not discriminate; it impacts every race, gender, age and socioeconomic background, leaving no community untouched. I personally know men and women who have been victims of domestic violence, and it is often the ones you least expect.

It takes a very brave person to access support to break this cycle because leaving an abusive relationship is often the most dangerous and frightening time for survivors. Research consistently shows, and frontline services attest, that women who leave domestic violence relationships often face a new set of fears. Leaving a domestic violence relationship does not end the fear; it is often the beginning of a new one. Women worry about retaliation, losing their children, financial hardship, homelessness and not being believed. The fear of isolation, stigma and starting over can feel overwhelming, making escape as frightening as the abuse itself.

Within the last decade the number of calls for service to domestic and family violence incidents increased approximately 218 per cent, and the Queensland police responded to over 192,000 DFV occurrences in the last financial year. In Cairns we have some of the worst domestic violence statistics in the entire state. In terms of strangulation offences, Cairns sits at the second worst in the state but is the worst per capita. In terms of contravening DVO charges, Cairns sits at the fourth worst in the state. In terms of flagged DFV offences, Cairns sits at the worst in the state, surpassing Brisbane and Townsville.

This breaks the heart of every Far North Queenslander. This is the result of 10 years of not putting the rights of victims ahead of the rights of criminals. Ten years of weak laws have resulted in some of the highest numbers in Cairns we have ever seen. In 2019 the number of contravene DVO charges was at 1,265, and this grew under Labor to 3,100. The number of flagged DV charges lodged was 674, and under Labor this grew to over 2½ thousand. Queensland police have confirmed 2,848 breaches of domestic violence orders were recorded in the Cairns police division in 2024 alone.

Over the past 10 months these numbers have come down across Cairns in many instances. Flagged DFV offences are down 12.3 per cent and the number of contravene DVO charges lodged is down 6.2 per cent. However, we still have a very long way to go. This bill will help address the domestic and family violence crisis plaguing our city.

Last month, a Cairns man became the first person convicted under the new coercive control laws that came into power in May this year. We must do a lot more. The goal of this bill is simple: to give police the laws they need to fight this domestic violence crime crisis. The police ask and we listen, and we are delivering through this important bill.

Victims' stories and the heartbreaking statistics tell us one thing: the old system is broken. After 10 years of decline under Labor, the LNP in 10 months is delivering for Queensland. Our hardworking Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister Camm, is doing an incredibly important job and I thank her and her team for this bill. I give my full support to the bill.