




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2025

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

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (9.10 pm): Domestic and family violence remains one of the most confronting and heartbreaking challenges in Queensland today. As legislators, we carry a deep responsibility not just to respond to it but to make sure that our systems, our laws and our services work in the best interests of those who rely on them so much. People experiencing domestic and family violence often turn to police first. For many it is a moment of fear, crisis and desperation. I begin by acknowledging the remarkable work being done by our frontline police officers in Queensland today. Their commitment to community safety, particularly in DFV situations, is nothing short of extraordinary.

The nature of domestic and family violence—often private, emotional and complex—makes it one of the most difficult issues for police to manage on the ground. I have heard that firsthand from my twin brother, who tells me it is one of the most challenging things they have to attend to because you never know what you are going to get. In 2023-24 alone the Queensland Police Service responded to more than 192,000 DFV matters. In some parts of the state, officers report that domestic and family violence now represents up to 90 per cent of their daily workload. This speaks not only to the scale of the issue but also to the increasing pressure placed on our frontline services. Police officers are stretched and time poor. They are often the only support system available to people in their moment of crisis, and they deserve tools that enable them to do their job effectively while ensuring victims remain at the centre of their response.

This bill contains a number of important reforms and we welcome several aspects of it. We support the GPS pilot for high-risk offenders, the expansion of videorecorded evidence-in-chief to better support victim-survivors giving testimony, and the technical amendments that aim to improve the operation of the approved provider list. Today I want to focus on one part of the bill that has rightly attracted substantial scrutiny, as we have heard tonight already: the introduction of police protection directions, or PPDs.

Under this new framework police officers would be able to issue a 12-month protection direction to someone they reasonably believe has committed domestic violence. On the surface it may appear to be a practical response, a way to ease pressure on our courts and provide immediate protection without delay, but reforms of this nature cannot be judged on efficiency alone. They must also be judged on safety, integrity and fairness. Throughout the committee process, in consultations and at estimates we heard from a range of experts and stakeholders, people with deep expertise in domestic and family violence, who expressed strong reservations about the proposal. Their concerns were not about police having the wrong intentions: their concerns were about what can happen when decisions are made too quickly, without proper oversight or safeguards in place and without the voice of victim-survivors guiding the process.

One of the most serious issues raised is the risk of misidentification. We have made some progress in recent years to reduce the occurrence of victims being misidentified as perpetrators, but we are still far from where we need to be in this space. Recent figures show that over 31 per cent of those

listed as respondents in DFV matters are women. This does not necessarily mean they are all misidentified, but it does indicate that something is not working as it should. The danger is that, under pressure and in complex and fast-moving situations, police may get it wrong. That is not a criticism of them at all; it is a reality that we must prepare for as part of this bill. If a woman who is a victim is misidentified and placed on a 12-month order the consequences for her can be devastating. It can affect her housing, her ability to work, her access to her children but, most importantly, her safety. In some cases it can increase her risk of harm or potentially worse.

That is why we believe the bill should include a mandatory review mechanism, particularly in cases where a woman is named as the respondent. This review should involve a senior police officer and a domestic and family violence specialist to ensure that, where misidentification has occurred, it can be addressed swiftly and fairly.

We also believe that victim-survivor consent is a missing and vital part of the proposed framework. As it stands, there is no requirement for the aggrieved person to consent to the PPD being issued. That removes a fundamental element of victim agency. It denies them the opportunity to express whether this is the right course of action for their situation. At worst, it can create further harm for them. The sector has been very clear that victim-survivors need to be heard, not overridden. As we have heard tonight from the shadow minister, we are therefore proposing amendments to require consent from the aggrieved person before a PPD is issued to ensure police action aligns with the needs, safety and wishes of the person who is most at risk.

A further area of concern is the removal of court oversight. Currently, when a police protection notice is issued it leads to an application for a court ordered domestic violence order. That process, imperfect as it may be, brings structure, scrutiny and crucial opportunities for connection to legal assistance, support services and, where appropriate, referrals to behaviour change programs. Under the PPD model, much of that support could be bypassed. There is a real risk of victim-survivors missing out on the assistance they need simply because the system becomes more administratively efficient. We propose that if a PPD is issued police should be required to provide referrals to appropriate services, including housing, counselling, legal assistance and health supports, to ensure those victims do not fall through the cracks. Where appropriate, there also needs to be an obligation for referrals for perpetrators to behaviour change programs that might help stop the cycle of abuse.

The bill also raises questions around data transparency. PPDs would not be captured in the same way as a court ordered DVO, and that shift may affect the visibility of DFV trends in Queensland. A drop in recorded DVOs, for instance, could be misrepresented as a reduction in violence when it simply reflects a change in recording practices. We are therefore calling for the publication of clear, regular data around PPDs, including the number issued, the number breached and the number later revoked due to misidentification. This transparency will help ensure Queenslanders, especially victim-survivors, can have trust in the system and the data we use to drive change.

In addition, the two-year review of the PPD framework should be conducted by an independent external body to ensure that the evaluation is rigorous, impartial and focused on the outcomes for those who are most affected.

We also ask the government to consider how information sharing will work under this new model. One important example is the Family Responsibilities Commission, which provides culturally responsive support and case management for First Nations families, particularly in Far North Queensland. Currently, court issued orders can trigger appropriate responses through that system. PPDs, however, may not, and that gap could have serious consequences for those people. We believe that the bill should include provisions for appropriate information sharing with the FRC and other relevant bodies to ensure coordinated responses are maintained.

In all of this, it is important to note that the opposition is not opposed to the concept of police issued protection directions. In fact, when in government Labor and the then minister, Mark Ryan, had begun examining how such tools might work but with clear parameters: as a trial, with strong safeguards and under very careful evaluation. We support efforts to reduce the administration burden on our police officers, but we do not believe it should come at the expense of victim safety, legal oversight or accountability. The reforms in this bill, particularly around PPDs, need to be done right. If we get it wrong, we risk causing more harm to those we are trying to protect. If we get it right—with consent, oversight, proper referral pathways and transparency—it could become a valuable tool that balances immediate protection with long-term safety for victims.

In conclusion, we call on the government to consider our proposed amendments in good faith. They are not about pointscoring; they are about strengthening this bill, responding to the advice of experts and delivering a more effective and safer framework for those affected by domestic and family

violence. To our police, thank you. To our frontline services, we see your tireless work day in, day out. To those who have experienced and are experiencing domestic and family violence, we hear you and we are committed to doing things better. Let's not miss this opportunity to get it right tonight.