




Speech By  
**Hon. Meaghan Scanlon**

**MEMBER FOR GAVEN**

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Record of Proceedings, 27 August 2025

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

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (8.52 pm): Domestic and family violence has no place in Queensland. It is insidious, it is far too prevalent and it destroys lives. On an issue as serious as this, the parliament should always strive for bipartisanship. Victim-survivors deserve nothing less than a system that is safe, effective and guided by evidence and not politics. The Labor opposition approaches this bill in that spirit. That is why, as our shadow minister has outlined, we have circulated amendments. We want these laws to work. There are reforms in this bill that, if done properly and with adequate safeguards, could help both victim-survivors and our hardworking frontline police. Equally, there are other elements that pose risks that cannot be ignored—risks that if mishandled could mean the difference between life or death.

Before I begin with the substance of the bill, I want to address some of the last-minute amendments that have been rushed through by the LNP regarding the governance of Forensic Science Queensland. These changes are allegedly a response to recommendation 14 of the report on operation matters at FSQ which outlined that the review of the act should be 'comprehensive'. Instead, what we see tonight, at the eleventh hour, are changes that seem to hand extraordinary discretion to the Attorney-General. This bill now provides the Attorney-General with the ability to 'suspend the director for any reason or none'. It also significantly broadens eligibility for appointments requiring only that the Attorney-General be satisfied someone is appropriately qualified, removing those previous requirements of expertise.

Given this government's track record of jobs for mates, one cannot help wonder why these provisions are being rammed through without proper scrutiny. Victim-survivors and frontline workers deserve confidence that FSQ's governance is robust and independent, and not the subject of political whim.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Furner): Pause the clock. The previous speaker from the government side was listened to in silence. I expect the same for opposition speakers.

**Ms SCANLON:** The amendments also appear to make some fairly significant changes to the principle of natural justice and, again, one wonders why these changes are being rushed through without adequate scrutiny.

I will come back to the substance of the bill. In response to some of the comments made by the police minister, I want to place on the record that I and everyone on this side of the House has enormous respect for the Queensland Police Service. My dad was a police officer for many years on the Gold Coast, and I know firsthand the pressures they face and the sacrifices that they make. Responding to domestic and family violence accounts for an enormous proportion of their workload and Labor will always back reforms that respond to that pressure. Reforms to ease workload must never come at the expense of victim-survivor safety. That is a line in the sand.

The most significant part of this bill is the introduction of police protection directions. The government says these PPDs will ease police workload, but the experts are clear that, without safeguards, they risk doing more harm than good. The Queensland Law Society stated plainly—

The consequences of being improperly named as the respondent to a police protection direction will be dire. Victims who are misidentified will not have the benefit of a protection order and may face consequences relating to their housing situation, employment and contact with their children.

QCOSS also put it bluntly—

... the consequences of misidentification can be severe and potentially fatal. Where a person is misidentified, that means they will be left without protection at that incident.

That is the evidence from the very people this government promised to listen to. In fact, during estimates, when the director-general was asked whether it was correct that ‘the prevention of domestic and family violence sector do not and did not support the new police protection direction laws’, the director-general stated, ‘I understand that is true, yes.’

We know that misidentification is not hypothetical. According to the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board annual report, in almost half of the cases of women killed in domestic and family violence related homicides, the woman had previously been identified as the person using violence. Moreover, in nearly all domestic and family violence related deaths of Aboriginal women reviewed, the deceased had been recorded both as the respondent and aggrieved prior to their death. This is not simply a statistic; it reflects a pattern where victims have been misidentified, increasing their risk rather than keeping them safe.

Of course, there are many instances where the person most in need of protection is identified correctly, and we acknowledge the significant steps that have been taken to address misidentification through the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce and the commission of inquiry, but we need to ensure sufficient safeguards are in place because in cases of misidentification—and hopefully they are few or none—the consequences are devastating.

Before the election, Labor was developing reforms to PPDs, but our approach was different to the one that is being put forward. We were designing a trial so the unintended consequences could be identified and fixed. We built in stronger safeguards and ensured victim-survivor safety was at the centre. This government’s approach strips away court oversight, denies victims access to legal advice and referrals and leaves no formal role for victims’ voices. As the Queensland Law Society explained, court processes provide checks and balances, both parties are heard, legal representatives are present, judges weigh the facts and the victims can be linked to support services.

One area of the bill that does deserve some scrutiny is the expansion of videorecorded evidence-in-chief. This framework was first introduced by Labor as a pilot to reduce trauma for victim-survivors, and we support the expansion statewide. The way the government has chosen to expand it raises some red flags because, at the same time as broadening its use, the bill strips away a number of critical safeguards.

First, it removes the requirement that a specialised trained police officer take the statement. That safeguard was there for a reason. Stakeholders warned that if statements are taken by officers without specialist training then the quality and fairness of that evidence can be undermined. The Queensland Law Society cautioned that removing this requirement risks ‘compromising the integrity of the statement and the trial process’, because poorly handled evidence can be challenged in court, and that retraumatises victims all over again.

Second, the bill removes the requirement for the statement to be sworn. That safeguard gave weight and reliability to the evidence, protecting both the victim and the integrity of proceedings. Without it, the evidentiary value is weakened.

Third, the bill waters down the consent requirements. Under the current arrangements, survivors provide consent multiple times in different forms so they remain fully informed and in control. Under this bill, consent would only need to be given once, informally and verbally. As the Women’s Legal Service and others pointed out, that raises serious questions about whether victim-survivors will have the opportunity to truly exercise their agency or whether in the heat of the moment they agree without advice or support.

These safeguards were not red tape. They were protections—protections for victims, for police and for the justice system itself. As stakeholders put it plainly, removing them risks undermining the very purpose of the reform, which is to make the process safer and less traumatic for victim-survivors. Labor supports the framework. We know that it works, but if it is to be expanded we hope that the government addresses some of these concerns.

As the shadow minister has already outlined, there are a range of measures that we think the government could implement that would make this bill better. The shadow minister has outlined recommendations around a specialist review, around requiring victim-survivor consent, around referrals to make sure that people are getting the appropriate information and support that they need, and around information sharing and public reporting, because we think it is important that we really understand the data and the evidence if these reforms are going to be passed through the parliament. These are not obstacles; they are safeguards and they are what experts, advocates and survivors themselves are calling for.

Domestic and family violence is too serious to be distilled down into political slogans. The government promised to listen to experts. It promised to put victims first. It promised transparency. On this bill they have broken all three of those promises. Labor supports reforms that are evidence-based, reforms that support police and reforms that protect victims. That is why we support the expansion of videorecorded evidence-in-chief. That is why we support the idea of PPD-style tools—but only with proper safeguards, oversight and transparency, because getting this wrong is not measured in talking points; it is measured in lives lost. Victim-survivors deserve a government that never forgets that.