



Speech By
Bree James

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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MOTION

Minister for Families, Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

 **Ms JAMES** (Barron River—LNP) (6.08 pm): I rise today in support of our amendment. I recall the worst flood to hit our region, the Cyclone Jasper floods in Far North Queensland. The former member for Barron River, who was also the former child safety minister, was nowhere to be seen in Barron River for at least two weeks during that disaster. He was at the tennis! In Far North Queensland we do not experience policy; we experience—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Barron River has the call.

Ms JAMES: I will take the interjection from the member for Mansfield, who I think is on a warning.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Barron River, you have the call.

Ms JAMES: In Far North Queensland we do not experience policy; we experience consequences of poor policy. We see the flashing lights on the Captain Cook Highway—

Mr Smith interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg, you are now on a warning.

Ms JAMES: We see the exhausted teachers supporting children who are carrying adult sized trauma, empty bellies and scars we cannot see but we can feel; we can see the grandparents stepping in to raise kids because someone else could not keep them safe; and we have one of the highest rates of domestic violence and strangulation in the state. It is heartbreaking.

Behind every statistic is an adult or a child who is just trying to make tomorrow better than yesterday. For too long the response was reactive—record the incident, process the paperwork and move to the next crisis—but this government is doing something different. We are redesigning the system so that harm is prevented, not just documented—

Ms Asif interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Sandgate, you have had your go.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Ms JAMES: I take the interjection from the member for Pine Rivers. We say 'hakuna matata', as you said, but it does mean 'no worries'. There are plenty of people worrying in Cairns, I can assure you.

We have strengthened domestic and family violence laws so police can act immediately, not just after escalation. High-risk offenders can now be GPS monitored. Tracking perpetrators means victims do not have to live in fear. This is an option now for the police. We changed these laws last year to protect more women from high-risk domestic and family violence offenders.

Having videorecorded evidence means survivors tell their story once and do not have to relive the trauma over and over in the courtroom. In North Queensland we are delivering a 24/7 crisis line because violence does not wait for business hours and neither should help. We recently announced \$19.3 million in funding to boost the Cairns courthouse DFV project, which includes construction of a brand new courtroom dedicated to DFV matters, a new secure DFV safe room and refurbishment of two existing courtrooms, ensuring victim-survivors can have their matters heard sooner and because everyone deserves to feel safe when seeking justice.

Far North Queensland was also the first place for a man to be charged with the new coercive control laws our government introduced last year. Reform is not just about laws; it is about changing behaviour, and we are investing in prevention and perpetrator intervention programs to stop violence before children grow up thinking that it is normal. The safest DFV response is the one that prevents the next victim.

No child chooses the home they grow up in and, sadly, many children live in terrible conditions that you would not leave an animal in. We are rebuilding the system around stability. We are boosting support payments to carers so more families can step forward. We are piloting professional foster care to provide consistent, skilled support for complex children. We are introducing dual-carer residential models so children have relationships, not rosters. We are planning secure care facilities for the highest risk cases so children and carers remain safe. For the first time, we actually went looking for children in care who are missing, not waiting for paperwork to catch up with reality.

This is what change looks like: no announcements, just action. We have also established a commission of inquiry because systems only improve when governments are honest about failure. We will not hide the problems behind reports. We will confront them and we will fix them because children in Far North Queensland deserve the same protection as children anywhere in Queensland. We are already seeing early results, fewer victims and more offenders held accountable.

Queenslanders watched a revolving door of ministers under the former Labor government, with announcements, reviews and road maps that led nowhere. The difference today is leadership. Instead of press conferences followed by silence, we have a smart, dedicated and passionate minister methodically implementing reform step by step, rebuilding a system that has been allowed to drift for far too long. Protecting children is not solved by one speech.

(Time expired)