


~~Bill read a third time.~~

~~Long Title~~

~~ **Hon. PT LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (Attorney General, Minister for Local Government and Special Minister of State) (5.37 pm): I move—~~

~~40 Long title~~

~~Long title, from 'the Coastal' to 'the Plumbing'—~~

~~omit, insert—~~

~~'the City of Brisbane Act 2010, the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995, the Land Sales Act 1984, the Local Government Act 2009, the Local Government Electoral Act 2011, the Plumbing'.~~

~~Amendment agreed to.~~


~~Question put—That the long title of the bill, as amended, be agreed to.~~

~~Motion agreed to.~~

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION BILL

Resumed from 6 September 2011 (see p. 2778).

Second Reading

~~ **Hon. KL STRUTHERS** (Algerie—ALP) (Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women) (5.38 pm): I move—~~

~~That the bill be now read a second time.~~

It is a great honour for me to be a minister in this House in this government introducing stronger domestic violence laws. I was around in the late eighties when we were calling for law reform when there were not laws specifically about domestic violence. There were some provisions in various other areas of legislation, but there was not a strong domestic violence act. We got that in 1989 after a lot of lobbying—and some of those people are here in the gallery today, and I thank them for their efforts. So 23 years ago we got that legislation. Anna Bligh's families minister amended the legislation about eight years ago, and we are here today after a couple of years of consultation and effort to bring in stronger laws to make sure that we hold perpetrators accountable for their actions and that we give greater protection to those who are harmed by domestic violence.

023

Domestic violence occurs in all household types, across all income groups. Our government is absolutely relentless in our efforts to make sure that people are protected and to make sure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. Predominantly women and children are the ones affected. In most cases it is women and children who are the victims of domestic violence, although it does occur in other relationships and men, too, can be victims of domestic violence. Since January 2011, there have been 23 domestic and family violence related homicides in Queensland. In 2010-11 the Queensland Police Service recorded 52,850 domestic and family violence occurrences, an increase of seven per cent on the previous year. The courts received over 22,000 applications for domestic violence orders.

As I said, this bill was developed with extensive input from domestic and family violence service providers and workers right across the state in the regions and rural areas of Queensland. My departmental staff also worked very closely with the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and other areas of government. I particularly want to pay tribute to the police because they are on the front line of many of these very difficult, dangerous and complex situations. Because of the nature of human relationships, these issues are not easy to work out or deal with. I thank the police. They have come a long way in 20 years in taking these issues as seriously as they ought to. In the old days, in the 80s, there was a sense that domestic violence was a private family matter; that you did not intervene. Police did not like to go, and I guess they still do not like to go. The reality is that it is dangerous for the police so imagine how dangerous it is for those in that house. These issues were dealt with in many cases in the privacy of the home. People felt a silence and a stigma around these issues. It is very pleasing to be here today bringing these new laws into being in this parliament.

Our message as a government is very clear: we will not cop domestic violence. We will not cop breaches of domestic violence orders. We are seeing over 10,000 breaches of orders each year, and we will not cop offenders who do not take responsibility for their actions. There are new provisions in this legislation to get very serious. Tougher penalties on breaches, for example, is one method we will be using.

Our whole community is now getting behind this issue and has come a long way in the past couple of decades. This bill gives us a very clear direction in relation to what we believe and understand

to be domestic violence. Again, from those early years where it was seen as a private family matter, we are now very clear but there is a whole range of behaviours including intimidation that cause people to feel fear and live in fear and be very frightened for their safety. There are a whole range of sexual violations that occur in relation to intimate relationships. In fact, the data suggests that around 73 per cent of sexual offences are committed by someone known to the person. So a lot of sexual violence is occurring in domestic relationships and within people's own families.

I want to touch on some of the key changes in this bill and then some of the issues raised by the committee. I thank the Community Affairs Committee for its considered deliberations on this bill and its support for the bill to be passed. As I have said, the bill includes a wider definition of domestic violence. It is important that that occur because many police and others—for instance, people within the court system—have been I guess confused, frustrated or have found the complexity of these situations a little difficult at times. We are giving very clear directions about the definition.

I heard of a case last year where a couple had been in a relationship for only three months but she became pregnant so the attachment continued. She wanted rid of him. He did not want to accept that. He kept harassing and intimidating the children and the woman. Her father had to install security cameras around the house and tried to protect her as much as possible. This fellow at one point left a book on her doorstep bookmarked with the murder of a woman on that page—very intimidating behaviour; very frightening behaviour; terrifying behaviour. The kids were terrified. But police were I guess a little doubtful about how they could pursue that, because it was pretty clear that it was his and that he had left it there, but how do you get the evidence and what do you describe that behaviour as? We are very clear in this legislation that that sort of behaviour is not on. That sort of behaviour constitutes intimidation, having power and control over people and causing them great fear. We are not going to cop that sort of behaviour and our definitions in this legislation are a lot clearer than they have been in the past.

We have also expanded police powers. Police will have the power to issue police protection notices. This will provide immediate protection to victims of domestic and family violence and will improve police responses, particularly in remote and rural parts of Queensland. Other changes to strengthen police responses include amendments to the current detention powers so that a perpetrator of violence can be detained where their aggressive behaviour presents a continuing danger to those they have been harming. Also, police will have a new power that allows a police officer to direct a person to remain at a place so that that person can be served with an application order or notice or be told about an order.

That has been a problem in the past—actually serving orders on people and satisfying the requirements of the legislation. The other issue that has concerned a lot of people—and I went to a lot of consultations including a great meeting we had with Steve Kilburn in Chatsworth, another on the Sunshine Coast and others around the state—and that has been a consistent message was there is too much cross-application happening. On the face of it, it seems easier to put an order on both parties. We want to make sure we have a pro-investigative approach from the police. We want to make sure in the future that the intent of the legislation is followed, and that is that these are orders to protect from further harm. There has to be a proper investigation of who is most at risk. Who is likely to be harmed into the future?

The Criminal Code should apply if there is an assault or there has been harm of a criminal nature. That should also apply but these are orders to protect from further harm. So the sort of nonsense that has been happening with cross-applications has been happening too widely and too extensively, and we have made provision in this bill to make sure it is used only where it is needed. One of the bill's objectives is to make sure that we are much clearer about when these cross-applications ought to be applied for. A cross-application can be made by a police officer when he or she attends a domestic violence incident and decides to make an application against each of the parties, but there are very clear conditions in this bill about when that ought to occur. It is not logical except in exceptional circumstances that both people in a relationship can simultaneously be a victim and perpetrator and be subject to future harm. The very clear thing that domestic violence workers in the gallery and others will tell you is that there is a pattern of power and control, and these orders are to stop the person who has power and control over others from causing further harm. I am very pleased to see the work that our department and others have put into ensuring that we limit the extent of cross-applications.

We are also very clear that we want to hold perpetrators accountable. The majority of submissions to our review strongly supported the introduction of measures to increase the accountability of perpetrators. To achieve this, the bill will reform ouster conditions, behaviour change programs and breaches to domestic violence orders. I will touch on ouster orders. There has been provision for those but they have not been widely used by the courts. The ouster order prevents a person who is subject to an order from remaining at, entering or attempting to enter certain premises. That is important where there is likely to be further harm.

In relation to behaviour change programs, the bill makes it clear that the court can, with the agreement of the perpetrator, order a respondent to attend a behaviour change program or counselling.

It is very clear—and the committee made it clear, too, in its assessment of this—that these will only work if you get the agreement of the perpetrator. People running the programs know they are not going to work very well if people are reluctant. We have an intervention order that the courts can provide where, if there is a program in that area which they can access, there is then the option to provide an intervention order as well as the domestic violence order.

024 The other area that concerned a lot of people around the state was the breaches. There are far too many breaches. Orders are being applied for and granted and then there is this pattern of breaching those orders. Sometimes the person who has been harmed allows a perpetrator to come back to the house out of guilt, fear or whatever; sometimes that person in some way is party to the breach of the order. I accept that there are some really difficult and complex arrangements here, particularly when there are kids involved and issues of access to kids. There were nearly 10,000 breaches last year. This is far too many and we are making every attempt in this new bill to turn that around and minimise those breaches.

In relation to the committee report, the committee gave this bill a lot of consideration. I really do appreciate the extent to which committee members turned their minds to the provisions in this bill, particularly in relation to the interface between the Family Law Act and things happening within family law courts. The committee unanimously recommended that the bill be passed and I am very pleased that that bipartisan support is there.

I turn to the issue in relation to recommendation 4i concerned information sharing. The committee was concerned to make sure that there was an understanding between the Queensland Magistrates Court and the Family Court or the Federal Magistrates Court on the orders and what was happening. It is very difficult to get that full exchange. The federal government is doing a lot of work in relation to the interface of the Family Law Act with domestic violence and other legislation in state and territory jurisdictions. In this bill, there will be provisions which relate to the release of information or documents of proceedings and we are certainly keen to establish greater and clearer protocols between the various courts.

To acknowledge the committee's concern, I will move an amendment to clause 160(2) (f) during the consideration in detail stage of the bill to make it absolutely clear that another Australian court, which includes the Family Law Court of Australia, will be entitled to receive copies of domestic violence court records or documents where these are relevant to the proceedings of the court.

Recommendation 4ii relates to the development of information-sharing protocols between representatives of the Family Court of Australia and relevant Queensland government agencies. The government supports this unanimous recommendation and proposes that the Department of Communities commence discussions with those relevant agencies.

The Community Affairs Committee also wrote to the Department of Communities in relation to the evaluation of the Breaking the Cycle of Domestic and Family Violence program, which is our innovative program in Rockhampton. The Department of Communities advised the committee that there would not be a final evaluation ready by January 2012 but we will certainly be able to provide a status report and I will have further advice on that in the next week or two. I indicate to members of the committee that I am certainly keen about this. There is good news in that. I want you to talk about it. I want you to know about it and tell the world about it because it is a great integrated domestic violence project; it is a leading model in Australia.

I have spoken about this issue on many occasions in this House. The thing that concerns me and many people working in this area is that we can have the best laws and the best service system—we have a great service system and we are funding over \$190 million worth of services across the state—but we still have negative community attitudes. I mentioned earlier that 20 or 30 years ago domestic violence was seen as a private family matter. There are still people who hold to that view and there are still people who blame victims. There are still people who say, 'She must have been a nagging wife.' That stuff seems outdated but it is still around, and you still hear reports of that sort of victim blaming.

One of the research reports I saw on Friday which was released by the Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research—and that centre is based at the Central Queensland University in Mackay and is funded by my Department of Communities—indicated that 60 per cent of women did not seek help from available support services despite knowing that assistance was available. That spells to me stigma. That spells to me a fear of telling people and letting people know. That spells to me shame. It is so important that we keep fostering those positive community attitudes that this is not on, that you do not have to cop this, that you are not held responsible for this. I urge members to continue to challenge these behaviours in their communities—to challenge them at the clubs, pubs, football games or wherever they hear blokes or others diminishing and minimising the impact of domestic violence.

I commend all the support services which have been doing great work in this area. I commend the team at the Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research for the ongoing work they are doing in this area of domestic violence. I know that my own department, through its 'Act as 1' campaign, and agencies right around the state are continuing to challenge community attitudes. However, as I said, we

can have the best laws—and I think we have strong laws here, with increased penalties for breaches of domestic violence orders—but we really need to keep tackling those community attitudes.

In conclusion, I want to say that it disturbs me that we still have people who are aspiring to be members of this House who blame women for sexual violence committed against them—such as the candidate in Cairns, Gavin King, who said that women who drink to excess are partly to blame for rape. They are outrageous views. We need to challenge the attitude that says, ‘She’s a nagging woman and she deserved to be knocked around.’ Those sorts of attitudes need to be condemned.

As I said earlier, 60 per cent of women who were subject to domestic violence did not seek help, even though they knew support services were available. That is because they felt in part to blame and they felt shame. That is why they did not go, so this is important.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms STRUTHERS: I do not know why these members opposite do not get it. I do not understand why they do not get how much impact these sorts of negative, victim-blaming comments have.

I want to finish on a positive note. This is tremendous work. I really want to pay tribute to Megan Giles and the staff of my department who have done great work here. I absolutely pay tribute to them. They have been at this for a long time now. The service workers, the police and the court workers around the state—a whole lot of people—have contributed to this legislation. A whole lot of people, day in and day out, support people who are harmed by domestic violence. They do an absolutely thankless job at times but I pay tribute to their work. As I said at the outset, it is an absolute honour for me to bring the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Bill 2011 into this House. It is absolutely imperative legislation.

Ms SIMPSON (Maroochydore—LNP) (5.56 pm): This parliament today sends a bipartisan message of solidarity against domestic violence in all of its forms. This is not an issue which should be trivialised or even politicised for personal political reasons, like some members opposite will do. This is not an issue which should be hidden in the shadows or ignored. This issue should be brought into the light to achieve greater understanding and more effective action which will break the cycle.

While we can assume that there is a greater understanding in our community as to what constitutes domestic violence, sadly the statistics show that, despite decades of legal reform, too many people are still suffering and the impacts are intergenerational. Quite frankly, the figures on the level of domestic violence that is occurring in this state and across the nation are still shocking. The Queensland Police Service figures quoted in the explanatory speech identified that in 2009-10 there were 49,372 occurrences of domestic and family violence, an increase of 11.5 per cent on the previous year. This resulted in 8,033 charges for breach of domestic violence orders and 22,753 applications for DV orders to the courts, an increase of eight per cent on the previous year.

The Queensland Police Service annual statistical figures for 2010-11 further showed that the number of breaches of domestic violence protection order offences was still a worrying issue, and that this matter of ongoing enforcement, as opposed to the initial notification of domestic violence offences, continues to be a major issue. In 2009-10 there were 9,700 breaches of domestic violence protection order offences; in 2010-11 there were 10,294—a six per cent increase on the number of reported offences.

025 Of additional interest, the data of offences against a person shows that in 23 per cent of offences against a person the offender and victim were related. In summary, this legislation makes a number of key changes, particularly around the definition of domestic violence, the powers of police to put in place police orders and court endorsed but voluntary intervention orders and it increases the penalties for breaches. Legislation is another step forward in the move to free people from fear. Breaking the cycle of violence and serial abuse in family relationships requires strong laws, effective enforcement, appropriately funded services and a community that is educated and empowered to say no to abuse. We must build a healthier understanding of family relationships and the value of individuals who have a right to live their lives free from fear.

As has been mentioned, there is a change in the definition in law as to what constitutes domestic violence. I think most people understand that physical violence is wrong, but there are many other forms of abuse. That is why domestic violence has been captured by this new definition, which acknowledges that domestic violence can be—and significantly in respect of domestic violence—emotional, psychological, sexual, economic, or other threatening or manipulative behaviour, for example, if one member of the family threatens suicide as a method of controlling another person. That may seem incredible to people in this place. It is really hard to imagine how people who have been in a supposedly loving relationship can use such methods to control other people. This redefinition of domestic violence was also a recommendation of the Australian Law Reform Commission in November 2010 in its report titled *Family violence—a national legal response*.

As has been noted, there are a number of significant changes to police powers in this legislation. The police are really at the forefront not only in obviously enforcing the law but also in trying to bring about an intervention to provide safety for the victims of violence. Across the state police officers often

face some of their most dangerous experiences when attending to domestic violence incidents. We honour and respect the very difficult role the police play. This bill gives the police the ability to issue police protection notices, which will allow for the immediate protection of the victims of family and domestic violence. The conditions on this notice can give the police the ability to order a cool-down upon a perpetrator by legally excluding them from their home for up to 24 hours. This notice will also be considered as an application to the court providing short-term protection.

I will outline the police protection notice a little bit more, because it is quite a significant change. There are some quite specific measures around how police have to approach this issue. The legislation specifically requires that police investigate the matter. That might seem obvious, but it contains some express language in respect of the responsibilities of police as to how they enforce and go about considering whether to put in place a police protection notice. The legislation in one particular clause allows a police officer to issue a police protection notice against the person if the officer is at the same location as the respondent, reasonably believes that the respondent has committed domestic violence, reasonably believes that no other DVO or PPN—that is police protection notice—has been issued in respect of the respondent, the aggrieved person reasonably believes that a PPN is required to protect that aggrieved person from domestic violence and reasonably believes that the respondent should not be taken into custody. The approval of a supervising police officer is required for the issuing of a police protection notice and there are a number of other conditions upon the issuing of the police protection notice.

This measure was brought about after consultation with stakeholders in the industry, because it was recognised that the police needed to have the ability to provide, as a matter of urgency, a measure of safety to those who are at threat and also in respect of damage to their property. Previously, police could make a direct application to a magistrate outside of business hours for an urgent temporary protection order or they could detain a respondent for up to four hours and then release them on conditions similar to those of a DVO. However, for a number of reasons this application was not always adequate in order to provide some form of protection where there was a degree of urgency and also in rural and regional areas where sometimes access to a magistrate could not always be made available immediately. This bill will provide police with the power to detain an alleged perpetrator for up to eight hours, but more usually for about four hours. This power will be of assistance in areas where it takes time to ensure victim safety and for police to undertake their legal requirements.

Over the past few months I have visited a number of services and community workers around regional Queensland and I have had the opportunity to seek their further feedback not only in regard to this legislation but also in regard to the service support that they need to keep victims of violence safe. They certainly support this measure. One example that I was provided with concerned a victim and children who needed to be removed safely from a town but, owing to floodwaters—and it was not a recent flood—there were real difficulties in being able to do that. That meant that the service needed additional time to get the victim and the children to safety. Being in a rural and remote area it really was a situation where the victim's location was well known to the offender. Certainly, the more remote the community the harder it can be for some of these practical provisions to be able to get people to safety and for the legal mechanisms to be put in place. Some people may ask, 'Why eight hours?' but, owing to the size of the state, getting a victim out of that circumstance to another area, and on many occasions with their children, is not that easy. It requires that length of time. The first principle has to be the need to keep vulnerable people safe. The rights and liberties of the individual who is accused of committing domestic violence must be considered, but the first principle must be to keep the victim safe. In regard to an extension beyond four hours, a magistrate must be involved to provide the approval to extend, except where the respondent has an indication of being intoxicated.

I want to talk about some of the recommendations of the parliamentary committee. I had the privilege of serving on that committee with other members of this House. I think it was very useful to have the opportunity to hold hearings and hear directly from those who are at the service level and who support people who face these very difficult issues. We also had representations from the Police Service, and I will come back to that in a moment. It has been acknowledged by the minister that amendments will be moved in the consideration in detail in response to some of the recommendations of the committee. I thank the minister for taking these matters on board. One of the issues the committee raised was the wording of the intervention order. We noted from the minister and from the representations of stakeholders that the intention of the intervention order is to address perpetrator behaviour. The focus and policy intention is for the intervention order to be voluntary. There has not been a consistent number of perpetrator services or behavioural management services across the state. Such a service has not been mandated to be rolled out across the state.

I will come back to the issue of the intervention order being voluntary. We believed that the initial wording of the intervention order could be misconstrued to mean that it was mandatory. We made a recommendation that the intervention order be more clearly defined to say that it was not mandatory or that, in fact, there be reconsideration given to it not being mandatory and some penalties applied.

We note the minister's response that the intention is to ensure that people enter into these agreements in a voluntary way and that it is considered that this is the best way to ensure participation in

these particular measures. I think it would be fair to say that there is still a way to go to prove that this is the case. It has been acknowledged that there is not a consistent standard in relation to perpetrator programs across Australia and that they have varying results.

The committee also made recommendations in respect of ongoing monitoring of the availability of perpetrator programs. I believe that part of that monitoring really needs to ensure greater consideration as to whether there needs to be a mandatory component and, in respect of the monitoring of those perpetrator programs, an assessment of some of those that are currently underway. I certainly will be looking forward to seeing that information come forward.

This really is about trying to break the cycle of violence and acknowledging that it is often intergenerational. There is no excuse for anyone who perpetrates violence or other forms of domestic abuse—they have to take responsibility for their actions—but often it has been modelled to them in their own lives as children. Those who have been victims of abuse—as witnesses, as members of families—can sadly in many cases see that replicated later in life because that is the pattern of behaviour that they have experienced and think is normal family life. We know it should never be considered normal.

I would urge greater consideration in respect of programs for children who have been subjected to domestic violence to ensure that they also have as much support as possible to help break that potential cycle of abuse or dysfunctional relationships later in life.

Another concern about the wording of intervention orders was that there are so many other jurisdictions that have a range of similar wording but completely different definitions. We felt that that could also add to some of the confusion about the intention of this provision. As I have noted, there will be an amendment coming forward to make it clear that this is, in fact, a voluntary measure. I look forward to seeing the evaluation of some of the programs involved and an ongoing rollout of available services for children who are the victims of family abuse and also those perpetrators. We must first keep people safe and then set out to break this cycle.

I want to make reference to other recommendations of the committee. Recommendation 4i states—

An equivalent provision to s. 37 of the Tasmanian *Family Violence Act 2004* is incorporated into the bill to authorise the collection, use, disclosure, or otherwise dealing with personal information for the purpose of furthering the objects of the legislation.

The minister and the government acknowledged the committee's concern that the new Queensland legislation remove all doubt that there is no legislative barrier to the flow of information from the police and Magistrates Court to the Family Court of Australia and also to the Federal Magistrates Court. The minister has indicated support to ensure that this is more expressly understood and that information flowing from proceedings in domestic and family violence incidents does flow through to those jurisdictions.

One of the issues that the committee raised around the implementation of this act in respect of the police was that of resources. We note the strong support of the Police Service for this legislation and also its submission in respect of how much it believed was necessary in order to see training on and the rollout of this new Domestic and Family Violence Protection Bill. Given recent announcements of cutbacks in administrative and other support within the Police Service, I think it is particularly important that we emphasise that we do not want to see cuts to police resources that will impact upon the ability of police to do their job safely and to keep Queenslanders safe. That is absolutely paramount.

There are some significant changes in this legislation that the opposition and the Police Service support. They need our support to do that job. It is an extremely dangerous job. Tragically, the statistics show that Queensland is the domestic violence homicide capital of Australia. Almost 30 per cent—16 of 62—of the homicides in the state last year were related to domestic violence. When our police go into circumstances where they are acting according to their duty to keep families safe, to intervene and to apply the law, we must make sure that they are well resourced to do that job and are not in turn victims who are let down by a government that does not provide them with the support that they require.

The recommendation that the Police Service required approximately \$300,000 for the implementation of this legislation has been noted, but I am calling on the government to ensure that that money, and whatever more they require if it is more than that, is publicly identified and is not subject to the cutbacks that this government has been about in respect of police front-line services and also the support they need to be able to effectively do their job.

I want to address the issue of service delivery. I acknowledge that the other front-line heroes really are the service providers, professional and voluntary, who are out there providing assistance to people in some of the most distressing times of their life. Across this state there are many who have invested their lives in trying to make a difference—to keep people safe but also to help them rebuild their lives, realise their potential and re-establish their self-identity as people of value and worth who do not deserve to be abused and intimidated.


I recently visited Charters Towers. I know that in North Queensland there are huge distances people have to travel. I was advised by some of the community workers that they did not have any dedicated community worker or allocation for domestic violence in their area. I have to admit that I was

shocked to hear that there were up to seven incidents a week occurring in this community. There is no local shelter and there are no dedicated resources for domestic violence. I know that the Townsville based service does an excellent job. This is not a criticism of them; it is a cry for more help and a recognition that there are many centres that are experiencing quite unacceptable levels of domestic violence. Sadly, the victims of that violence still feel very, very vulnerable. More help is required.

Another huge hole in respect of service delivery—to ensure that when people reach out for help it is available—relates to women who have boys aged over 12. Most shelters cannot take boys aged over 12. We understand the reasons for that, but there is a need to address this hole in available services because there are women who are choosing not to access a shelter when they do need to go to safety and who are staying in that situation of danger. This is something that needs to be addressed. It is making a situation worse when there are no services available to women with boys aged over 12. They may have a number of children. They will have to see that boy go elsewhere or decide not to move out and stay in a position of danger.

027 I acknowledge that the legislation provides for stronger penalties in respect of breaches, which is appropriate. However, the spotlight needs to be shone on the fact that, despite the legal mechanisms being put in place, still people are not safe. There is real concern around keeping victims safe and ensuring that the police have the resources to provide as much backup to them as possible. However, there are a significant number of breaches. While the increase in the penalty is welcome, we still have a problem as the police are flat out providing backup and support because of cutbacks in many areas. They are not getting the support that they need. This is a major concern, as it is letting down victims of domestic and family abuse.

The legislation is important. The support of our frontline police officers is critical. Getting a message across to the broader community that domestic violence in all its forms is unacceptable is paramount. However, as we have seen, the service delivery to ensure that this is implemented as effectively as possible requires a lot more action. We need more than just legislation to see a change. I think many of us in this place believe that, while this is an improvement, the fight to ensure that people know they do not need to live in fear will go on until we see these figures diminish and disappear. Clearly there seems to be a pattern of increasing violence as more orders are required, which indicates that, despite the great improvements in the legal frameworks, there is a huge gap with regard to the need within our community. Today this parliament sends a bipartisan message of solidarity against domestic violence, because victims of violence do not deserve to be used as political pawns. They require the combined efforts not only of legislators, the police and all agents but also of the broader community because everybody has a role to play in breaking the cycle of violence and ensuring that another generation is free from that scar.

 **Mr DEMPSEY** (Bundaberg—LNP) (6.22 pm): It is a great privilege to rise as a member of this legislative assembly and talk on the issue of domestic violence. It is exceptionally pleasing to see a domestic violence protection bill before the House. When we talk about domestic violence, we have to realise that we are all involved. Each and every one of us has to take responsibility. We are from different backgrounds, social groups, cultural groups and are different ages and we are all a part of this. We have to make sure that we break the cycle of domestic violence. Male members of parliament need to encourage males within our communities to stand up and voice their disgust at domestic violence. They need to step up to the plate and ensure that other men in society realise that it is not on and it is not good enough. They must send a positive message to all in the community. Their sons and daughters will reflect that message. They will reflect the understanding that they have gained from their parents and their generations before them that domestic violence is unacceptable.

As a community, how do we do that? The bill goes a long way towards achieving it. Certainly, it is a positive and it is part of it. I wish to refer to some of the things that the minister mentioned and some of the things discussed in the explanatory notes to the bill. The explanatory notes refer to statistics. They state—

In 2009-2010, the Queensland Police Service recorded 49,372 domestic and family violence occurrences, an increase of 11.5 per cent on the previous year, and laid 8033 charges for breach of a domestic violence order. Of the 62 recorded homicides in 2009-2010, 17 were identified as being related to domestic violence.

It is believed that in the past financial year there was an increase in that figure to 20 deaths and an increase in domestic violence incidents of seven per cent. Those figures are very hard to accept. They show that, as a community and as members of parliament, we still have to work on this issue. We have to keep addressing the issues to ensure that the scourge of domestic violence is taken out of our society.

While it is awful to say, I note that in domestic violence situations there has been an increase in the degree of violence used by perpetrators. Perhaps that is an indication of an increase in drug and alcohol abuse or a change in the types of drugs being used. The explanatory notes mention pressures on families, such as economic pressures. Some young people do have to listen to their parents arguing over financial matters and other issues. That can be a form of violence. It is good that the bill recognises all forms of violence and takes into account the children. That is most important, because we have to

break the cycle. We have to ensure that the children are identified as part of the family and that they are looked after.

From my previous career, during which I attended domestic violence situations, I know that we need to provide support to families after an event. We need stability within the job. We can pass legislation to say that police will work so many hours to be trained to deal with certain circumstances so that they are able to cope with them. However, after they finish a job many police officers will go home and continue to think about the situation that they just left, sometimes for the rest of the night or even the rest of the week. They will know that little Johnny and little Mary are still in that environment. They will wonder whether they will become offenders in many years to come. I know that we need stability in dealing with domestic violence.

We need to ensure that the police officers, the people in government departments and those in non-government agencies have proper funding and infrastructure. We have to be really careful that we do not wear out those people and that they do not get overly stressed because they are helping the most vulnerable people. We need a system to do that. For example, in Bundaberg we had a domestic violence unit. We do not have it anymore. Bundaberg has one of the highest rates of domestic violence per head of population in the state. When the DV unit was operating within the community, the police became used to dealing with certain families and certain people. They would follow the process down the line. If you visited a certain family for a number of nights, you developed a relationship with them. You could follow their case through the court system and, if the situation arose again, you would know to deal with it as a matter of urgency. There was stability within the investigation as the police had ownership over that domestic violence situation. By working through a case and finalising it, they could further help other government and non-government agencies deal with the situation. In Bundaberg, the committee and staff of Eden Place are worth their weight in gold and always try their best. We have to look after them as much as possible.

We need stability. One can imagine that in suburbs of Brisbane and other larger areas, different police officers, a different crew, will turn up to address an ongoing issue. In smaller rural and country areas, the local police officer will turn up to a job. That officer will know the seriousness of the situation and will be able to deal with it to ensure that he or she does not have to return time and time again to deal with the same issues. That is also more efficient in terms of administration and paperwork. I am not the quickest typist in the world, so I could spend 3½ hours on paperwork because I would want the perpetrator to be dealt with properly by the court. If another crew attended on a different night, they would have to go through the same amount of paperwork. If you knew that there was a domestic situation, you could follow it up. I would mention Bundaberg's Sergeant Ken Hendrie—

Ms Struthers: You have DVLOs.

Mr DEMPSEY: Yes. By having that relationship, you may be able to solve the problem so that you do not have repeat calls to service and you may be able to break the cycle.

I would like to thank all the people who work within the domestic violence sector. I appreciate their efforts in dealing with very hard situations. Any money spent on domestic violence is money well spent, because we have to break the cycle. There are a number of different groups in the community that we need to resource. There are many different aspects to domestic violence that we have to address. I close by saying again that this is everybody's responsibility. No-one condones violence. No-one condones bullying, intimidation or power plays. People should understand that when we talk about domestic violence, we are talking about respect.

Debate, on motion of Mr Dempsey, adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.30 pm to 7.30 pm.