



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

Motion

30 July 2020

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (12:01):

"That this House:

(1) Notes that reports from the NSW Domestic Violence Review Team show that in 99 percent of domestic violence cases in New South Wales, the relationship between a victim of domestic violence and their abuser is characterised by the abuser's use of coercive and controlling behaviours towards the victim.

(2) Notes the use of these coercive and controlling behaviours is not a crime in New South Wales.

(3) Acknowledges legislation seeking to criminalise coercive control in other jurisdictions is proving successful.

(4) Calls on every Member of the Legislative Assembly to take real action on domestic violence and support legislation which seeks to criminalise coercive control in New South Wales."

I applaud the member for Shellharbour for moving this important motion. Over my 13 years in Parliament I have raised this matter in this House many times because it is important. I am pleased that the silence is finally ending and that the Government is taking the matter seriously, but much more needs to be done.

We know that domestic abuse is found in all sectors of our community. Women in harbour-side mansions can be victims just as much as women in social housing. Women in our cities can be victims just as much as women in the bush. There are men who are victims of abusive behaviours and we must support them too, but let us not kid ourselves: Overwhelmingly, victims of domestic abuse are women.

It is for all of us to stand up against this scourge and stop the cycle of abusive behaviours by some men. The past few months have been very challenging for the community of the Wallsend electorate, as they have for communities everywhere. The nature of isolation has meant that people in abusive relationships are less able to avoid their abusers. Money has been tighter and people are cut off from their support networks. That is fertile ground for the controlling and coercive behaviours mentioned by the member for Shellharbour. Reports from the New South Wales Domestic Violence Death Review Team indicate that these behaviours are very common in domestic violence cases. The winner of the 2020 Stella Prize, Ms Jess Hill, who has been writing and researching about domestic abuse since 2014, investigated those issues in her book, *See What You Made Me Do*. The book is a forensic examination of the causes and effects of domestic abuse and coercive control, and the extent of the problem in our society. She said:

Domestic abuse and coercive control steals people's language away from them ... It's just not good enough to me that there are millions of people who are alive right now who have lived through domestic abuse, who are not understood by the rest of Australia ... you're talking about 2 million women who've lived through intimate-partner violence, millions of grown-up children. So the numbers on that scale are enormous.

The Newcastle Herald recently reported on new crime data showing spikes in sexual assaults across the Hunter. Outside Newcastle, sexual assault is up nearly 20 per cent. In Port Stephens, sexual assault is up almost 50 per cent. In the Upper Hunter shire, stalk/intimidate/harass is up by more than 70 per cent. As we suffer through the present recession things may get even worse. We cannot pretend that incidences of domestic abuse will not increase when people will be out of work or stressed about money. They might drink more and existing tensions in relationships might build. In this vein, the Newcastle Domestic Violence Committee has called on the Government to help abuse survivors feel safer in the Local Court and with police. A very clever woman named Meighan Jenkins has made submissions about how we can help domestic violence victims. I would like to make sure that the Attorney General listens to her very good advice. I thank all workers in Lake Macquarie and the Newcastle Domestic Violence Committee for their hard work. I support and applaud the member for Shellharbour for raising this important and sensible motion.