



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**  
**Domestic Violence**  
**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 4 March 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Speaker** Morrison, Scott, MP

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**Mr MORRISON** (Cook—Minister for Social Services) (15:23): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this matter forward for this debate today. Domestic violence is an issue that transcends this place and its politics. We are a great country, but there is a dark corner and we speak about that dark corner today. Having this debate today—importantly, about the many things that are being done, have been done and must continue to be done—will shed light and expose this dark place of our great nation. It is my hope and the hope of the Abbott government that all Australians, collectively and individually, join together in our efforts to reduce and ultimately, as the Leader of the Opposition has just said, eliminate violence against women.

I acknowledge the contribution of all members of this place, past and present, and look forward to the contribution of those in the future who have worked so hard on this goal. I particularly acknowledge you, Madam Speaker, for your work in this area over a long period of time. You have had a very simple message: women must be respected. Throughout your career, you have lived that and you have brought great respect to women in this country. If we share that as a country, that goes a long way to addressing the issues. We live in a country, as we have reminded ourselves today, in which assault and violence are illegal, yet one in three women in Australia will experience domestic violence and one in five will experience sexual violence and one a week is murdered at the hands of a former or current partner. That is not the Australia I want my daughters to grow up in. That is not the country I see for them. That is something that brings us all together in this place: working towards avoiding that in their future. It saddens and sickens us that that has been the experience of so many Australian women—our sisters.

I see—as do ministers who have served in the portfolio I serve in today, and they sit across the chamber—both the causes and the consequences of this every day. You get a rare insight in this role, to see it at such a pervasive level across the community. That only stirs us up to address the matters that are before us. Violence against women is exactly that: it is violence and it is a crime and it is completely unacceptable. The government recognises that domestic violence needs to be a national priority. The Prime Minister has elevated it as an issue at every Commonwealth and state and territory level, through the Council of Australian Governments' agenda. The federal government will be seeking the agreement of all states and territories to the priorities through the implementation of the national domestic violence order scheme, so that a protection order issued in one state applies in all states. These are practical measures. The sentiment that has been expressed here today is important, but I think we all acknowledge that that sentiment must be translated into actual things that happen on the ground that provide the protections and deliver the changes that are necessary. The implementation of a national domestic violence order scheme is an important reform and an important change.

In addition, COAG will work to develop a set of national standards for how we intervene against perpetrators and hold them accountable and will consider the enactment of a national approach to deal with technology misuse and online safety so that we can protect women against newer forms of abuse. This even goes into the area of bullying. All of us who are parents of young daughters live in fear, frankly, of what they can be exposed to in the online space. It is not just young girls but women of all ages. This is something we must be across. The Prime Minister's announcement bolsters the work of the Australian government with state and territory governments and non-government organisations. The Leader of the Opposition has acknowledged their important role, as he should and as we should, through the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022. The Prime Minister has appointed an expert panel on preventing violence against women which rightly has as its foundation members our Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, and of course Ken Lay, the former Commissioner of Victoria Police.

In July last year, the government launched the second national action plan for violence against women and it allocated more than \$100 million over four years to support its delivery. I was there on that day and it was quite a sight to see the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator Cash, standing with every state and territory police commissioner in the country. The opposition leader was there, the deputy opposition leader was there and there were many members from the government. It was a statement of solidarity amongst our most senior law enforcement officers in the country, standing there resolutely and making it a priority for every one of

the police forces. It was a great thing to see, but it was not surprising, because they see it every day. I am the son of a policeman and I know a bit about what police go through every day—the trials that they deal with and what they see every day in this dark corner of our country. It affects them deeply and terribly, so I was not surprised to see them standing shoulder to shoulder with the parliament, with the government, saying, 'We will get this done.'

Under the second action plan, the Australian government is providing over \$100 million, as I said. It includes initiatives such as \$3.3 million for CrimTrac to develop and test a prototype for a national domestic violence order scheme. There is \$1.7 million to take the next steps in developing a national data collection and reporting framework that includes \$300,000 for the Australian Bureau of Statistics to augment data sets on victims and offenders. This is important data for planning and aligning your resources to ensure that you can tackle this problem and deploy people and schemes where you need to. There is \$1 million for the 1800RESPECT line—Australia's first national professional telephone and online counselling service. We have allocated \$3.5 million for projects under the Australian Research Council—20 separate projects, I understand, for women's safety under the 2014-16 research program and have made a \$1 million investment to establish a sports grants bank, from which national sporting codes can fund violence prevention activities.

The government has also delivered on its commitment of \$1 million to White Ribbon Australia to expand their campaign to culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous communities. As a former minister for immigration, and as others opposite will know, I know ensuring that you take the message from the mainstream into these quite discrete communities to ensure that they can address the very specific challenges they face. This is critical for recently-arrived migrants who come from quite different cultural settings to what is found in this country—helping women to understand their rights and the country in which they now live, and helping the men understand the country in which they now live. It is important that we roll this program out across the very many different linguistically and culturally diverse communities we have in Australia.

White Ribbon Australia is working to develop a culture of gender equality, which the Leader of the Opposition has also mentioned, and a culture of respect, where attitudes and behaviours that support the use of violence are no longer tolerated. The White Ribbon campaign aims to end violence against women by encouraging men and boys to take positive action to create change. We as a government have also provided \$6 million towards the Northern Territory's \$18 million domestic and family violence reduction strategy from 2014 to 2017, which is known as Safety is Everyone's Right. In addition, today Minister Cash, the minister assisting the Prime Minister for women, announced that the federal government will work with state and territory governments to deliver a \$30 million jointly-funded, national, awareness-raising campaign. I pay tribute to Minister Cash for her work in this area. While the federal government's commitment to ending domestic violence is resolute, the issues of inconsistent and inadequate sentencing and justice administration responses for domestic violence perpetrators must be addressed. The matters, which have been raised today in this debate and will continue with the other speakers, will enjoy much agreement in this chamber. It is important that we have occasions like this to try and stir on the action that I said has been there, is there now and must continue. It must continue, but we also need to take account and stock of the gains that are being made. Your contributions, and those of many others in this place, need to be acknowledged and need to be built on. We must also do the same things that motivated the people who came before us in this place and who acted on issues as well as they could in their times.

The government has this as a national priority; we are demonstrating that through the activities that we are already engaged in. The Leader of the Opposition has put forward proposals today, and the Prime Minister has agreed to discuss those with the Leader of the Opposition. This is a very worthy initiative and I commend this debate to the house.