



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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Questioner
Speaker Plibersek, Tanya, MP

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Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (15:33): This morning we woke to another front-page story in *The Canberra Times* about the brutal murder of Tara Costigan. Tara had sought, and gained, an interim domestic violence order against the man who is now charged with murdering her. She had received that order just one day before her death. Her sister and another man were injured in the same attack. Tara had two sons and a little girl, not much more than a week old. Her family wants us to remember that she died defending her children. Tara hoped that the company of her family, the provisions of the law and the resources of her government would protect her. They did not.

Tara Costigan is far from the only Australian woman whom our legal system, our governments, our society have failed. Rinabel Tiglao Blackmore died from injuries sustained when, in fear of her life, she jumped from a moving car. Leila Alavi was stabbed to death. Nikita Chawla was found dead in a unit in Brunswick West. Ainur Ismagul was found dead at her home. Kerry Michael was found beaten to death on Mount Roland. Adelle Collins was stabbed to death at her home. Fabiana Palhares died of injuries from being attacked with an axe in her home. Renee Carter was stabbed to death.

These are just the cases where police have laid charges and identified those charged as partners or ex-partners of the victims. They are just the cases this year. Our usual formulation is to say that nearly one in five, or 17 per cent, of Australian women aged 18 and over have experienced violence from a partner or a former partner since the age of 15. That is nearly one and half million women. More than 130,000 Australian women have been victims of violence by a current or a previous partner in the last 12 months. We have to ask ourselves: how many thousands of women—right now, this afternoon, tonight—will fear for their own lives, their own safety and those of their children in their own homes? How many have fled everything known and everything that is familiar, changed jobs, taken their children in the middle of the night, moved house, moved state, left behind the support of family and friends and—perhaps not for the first time—have moved again and again in a desperate attempt to escape? How many have had to leave their work because the perpetrator of the violence knows where they work? How many have become poor because they are no longer able to work because the perpetrator turns up to their workplace and harasses them. How many are afraid to leave a violent relationship because they know that one of the most dangerous times is when they leave the relationship, that leaving will lead to their murder, or they are terrified that if they leave and take the children, the children will be pursued, or if they leave without the children, the children will be hurt, or worse, in revenge? How many are in fear that the mechanisms of the courts and the resources of the law will not ultimately deter or prevent their abuser from killing them? How many have stayed because they have nowhere else to go?

These women are not statistics. Each and every one of them is a daughter, a sister and sometimes a mother or an aunt, and each one of them is a part of our community, and to each and every one of them we owe an unyielding determination that this will stop. Aside from being relatives, mothers, daughters, sisters and aunts, every one of these women is a human being, and every one of them is a citizen of our country and is owed this. Since the beginning of this year, more than one family every week have been left to mourn a loss that should never have happened. More than one family a week have been left with a hole in their hearts that will never be filled. To them too we owe it to say, 'This must stop.' We call on the government to stand with us today, with all Australians and all of us here, and say, 'This will stop.'