

a friend home from school. It can mean financial enslavement, where the family is held captive to the male wage and can never access the money to leave. It can mean locking a girlfriend in the house while he goes out clubbing because he is the 'jealous type'.

Sadly, through my role as Minister for Corrections, I have met many family violence victims at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Tarrengower Prison. As one general manager told me, prison for some of those women is a refuge, a place of safety from the men that would harm them, a place away from an environment of male aggression and male disrespect. This situation forces us to rethink our approach.

For the first time, male prisoners and remand inmates with a history of family violence are now being offered a men's behaviour change program specifically about family violence. We are also reducing the current backlog for behaviour change programs for men on corrections orders by expanding access to family violence programs to perpetrators, many of whom have been waiting between 3 and 12 months for a place. The programs will challenge behaviours related to family violence and promote non-abusive interactions. A support program is also offered to current and previous family members.

Some prisoners may not want to admit that they need to change their attitudes to women. In fact many perpetrators may have been victims themselves as children. But many are now parents, and we need to do what we can to get them to a position where they can say, 'The cycle of violence needs to stop'.

Unfortunately our prisons are full of both perpetrators and victims of family violence. On many occasions after I have left the walls of a prison, I reflect on my own life, as other members have done today. I too have been very fortunate. I have parents who have nurtured and encouraged me. I am married to a truly wonderful and caring woman, with whom I share two beautiful sons. The generational change required to reduce this problem must come from men. It is up to me and to all the men in this Parliament and the community.

I realise the most important job I have is to teach my two sons to respect the young girls around them, and at ages 8 and 10 they are never too young to learn. I know, as all members do, that we carry a responsibility to help deliver change. As individuals the magnitude of that change can sometimes seem very daunting, but we must unite across this chamber, across the Parliament, to achieve long-awaited change. We owe it very much to the countless victims.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — Other speakers, particularly our guests this morning, have eloquently brought home the lived experience and statistics of family violence. I see Kristy McKellar is in the gallery and I personally thank her again for her powerful words.

The incidence of family violence is high in the country. Special money, special programs and special leadership will be needed in country communities because work, the pub, sporting clubs and even barbecues are all deeply gendered in the country.

Sexist language, tolerance of even quite public family violence and pockets of deep poverty create a quite a problematic feel within some country towns. In my communities I have two areas that have particular issues with family violence: the Shire of Central Goldfields, which includes Maryborough; and Ararat Rural City. Central Goldfields rates number two and Ararat number 11. In both of these places there are innovative community programs by which people are trying to get on top of this terrible issue. I single out Say No to Family Violence, which is run by the Maryborough Rotary Club. I have talked about the program before. It is great to see groups of, basically, older blokes talking about family violence and trying to change attitudes within the Maryborough community. Similarly the White Ribbon Committee of Ararat does a huge amount of work in the community.

A final one I would like to mention in Ripon is the White Ribbon Shield, which is a football match held between the Clunes and Learmonth football and netball clubs in memory of Sharon Siermans. She played netball for both clubs and was murdered by her partner. Every year the clubs hold a football game and they go through the cultural change program with their players. It is great to see.

The former government created a really innovative program, Act@Work, in Ballarat and Ararat. It was launched by the former Minister for Community Services, Mary Wooldridge, and the former Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay. The program no longer has funding. We are waiting for the royal commission to finish. I would really like to see the program refunded, but after the end of December it will no longer exist.

In my final 2 minutes — because I understand we should keep our contributions brief — there is one other issue I want to talk about, and that is, access for family violence victims to the courts in Ripon. I have a number of courts that have buildings that are over 100 years old, and I have talked about this in other circumstances.

They do not have meeting rooms, and they have only a single door for both victims and perpetrators to go through. There are repeated incidents of apprehended violence orders being breached outside the courts because there is nowhere for victims to go. The answers we are getting from the court system are that people can have videoconferencing, or they can travel to Bendigo or Ballarat. That puts insurmountable barriers in front of the women in Maryborough, Ararat, St Arnaud and Stawell who need to be able to access the Magistrates Court in a timely way that is local to them. I believe the money has to be found to upgrade the courthouses so women can continue to seek justice in their communities.

The final thing I want to say in relation to the courts is that I remain deeply concerned at the capricious nature of quite a lot of the justice being served in this area by magistrates. It really comes down to which one you get on what day as to what happens to a perpetrator, and we need to fix that. It is not good enough that women who have finally stood up and said, 'Enough is enough', then have to go through quite a random experience as to whether they are believed, what will happen to them and what will happen to their partner. I believe that is an area that is not about funding but is about change, and it does require legislation.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — It is a real honour to rise to speak on this matter of great importance on the day that Rosie Batty addressed a joint sitting of both houses. I congratulate Rosie and Kristy McKellar for their courage and determination to raise the issue of family violence and to make changes in all areas of government and the community. I note in media reports that today is described as a rare privilege for Rosie to address us in this place; I see it as our privilege to have the opportunity to be a part of this significant event today. I thank Rosie and Kristy and the other speakers for sharing their stories and experiences with us and, just as importantly, with the broader community.

We all know of the horrors of family violence and the consequences that come from it. That is why the Andrews Labor government has made a significant commitment to addressing the issue of family violence and has provided \$81.3 million to support Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. I want to focus on what I can do in my own electorate of Geelong. Geelong is a great city, but what happens behind closed doors is of great concern. The Minister for Women, who is also the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, has worked tirelessly on this issue. Her commitment to addressing this issue has seen visits to many electorates, including my own in Geelong.

In June this year the Labor members of Parliament held a community forum to generate discussion about family violence in my electorate. The forum was very well attended and clearly indicated that the people of Geelong want to be a part of the solution. They listened to the minister outline the details of the royal commission. The minister also made it clear that family violence is a whole-of-community problem that will need a whole-of-community approach. We heard from speakers such as Pauline Wright, the CEO of Minerva Community Services, who spoke about the support that her team offers to women and children. These dedicated workers provide support for housing, court and legal matters, counselling, basic necessities and a lot more. They are exceptional workers in our community.

Kevin Godfrey from the Geelong police family violence unit gave a comprehensive overview of the work his team is doing and its innovative approach to addressing family violence. Of note is the three by three by three model, in which after a callout police make contact after three days, after three weeks and after three months, but they also do surprise visits. The commitment by Kevin and his team is to be commended. The collaborative approach of Geelong police and the relevant services is of great benefit to the Geelong community. It shows clearly that these important services are working and growing together. Since the forum in June other organisations have held a variety of forums and events to highlight the issues of family violence and to discuss solutions.

I am pleased that the minister has agreed to come to Geelong for a follow-up forum next week to provide an update on the royal commission and to discuss how best to address the key aims of the Victoria Against Violence campaign. As the Member for Geelong I am proud to be a member of the Andrews Labor government, which will give me the opportunity to work with my community to address these family violence issues.

The statistics on the incidence of family violence are frightening. In the Geelong area police statistics show that in 2011 there were 1585 reported incidents and in 2014 there were 3085. I have spoken to many women who are experiencing or have experienced family violence, and their stories are tragic and full of despair, but many are rebuilding their lives with the support of services. One of the key messages from many of the women I have spoken to is the need to change the culture. The belief that women have somehow asked for it is just disturbing.