Make Reporting Domestic Violence Mandatory

Opposition Leader Jodeen Carney has been a long time supporter of making reporting of domestic violence mandatory. Just as recently as June this year Ms Carney called on the Chief Minister to take action. Sadly no action has been taken.

On the 13th and again on the 14th June 2006 Opposition Leader Jodeen Carney asked the Chief Minister whether or not she would support mandatory reporting of domestic violence.

Unfortunately the Chief Minister failed to answer the question on the 13th and then on the 14th said it should happen but to date there has been no announcements and no action.

“Again today in the paper we see that it is loaded with stories about the problems of violence in the Territory and the Government’s own crime statistics show that violent crimes are rising in the Territory,” Ms Carney said.

“When it comes to domestic violence people need to know it is not acceptable in any way shape or form and I again call on the Chief Minister to immediately put in place mandatory reporting of such incidents.

“The Chief Minister also needs to stop blaming the former CLP Government for things they have had 5 years to take action on. Ms Martin has been at the helm for 5 years now, with more money than any CLP Government ever dreamed of having and in terms of violent crimes, things are only getting worse.

“As recently as yesterday there have been further calls for the mandatory reporting of domestic violence and yet all we hear is silence from the Chief Minister.

“The Chief Minister has a choice she can take action or do nothing. Her form card suggests that nothing will be the response however, I live in hope that for once she will take action,” Ms Carney said.

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Hansard 13th June 2006:

QUESTION
CARNEY:

“Should I become Chief Minister, I would immediately make it mandatory to report domestic violence, remove customary law from the consideration of courts when sentencing violent Aboriginal men, remove violent men from their communities while they wait to be dealt with by the courts. ……..I will cease doing business with Aboriginal organisations where men who hold public office have been convicted of crimes of sexual or physical violence. I would also prioritise the removal of Aboriginal children at risk. I would implement these reforms. However, since you are the Chief Minister and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, will you?”

Hansard 14th June 2006:

QUESTION
CARNEY:

“Yesterday, I asked you whether you supported the mandatory reporting of domestic violence, and you were busy trying to blame everyone else for your shortcomings. In doing so, you forgot to answer the question. Would you please answer this question? Do you support the mandatory reporting of domestic violence?”

ANSWER
Martin:

Mr Acting Speaker, it is an important question and domestic violence is certainly a crime that happens all too often in the Territory and, in the current context of debate, all too often in our Aboriginal communities. I spoke yesterday at length about the work that our Police Force, particularly, is doing with their Domestic Violence Units across the Territory. I believe that all crimes should be reported. I believe it is important that domestic violence be reported. We have had mandatory reporting in place for child abuse for a long time across the Territory, and that is strongly supported. I believe we should have a situation where it is mandatory to report the crimes that come under domestic violence. I know that there are difficulties with that.

Over the last 25 to 30 years, as the whole issue of domestic violence has been raised around Australia, we have seen that it was one of the crimes that a lid was kept on and, within homes women in particular were not comfortable in reporting domestic violence. They were not comfortable in reporting crimes that would mean their families would be disrupted. There was a lot of work done over those past 30 years. All praise to those who did the work and were so active in that, that women who do experience domestic violence in the wider community now report it.

The next step is to tackle domestic violence in our Aboriginal communities. It is a complex issue. I went through some of those issues yesterday, about the difficulties of Aboriginal relationships and families that women do have reporting. I praise the work our police are doing in their Domestic Violence Units to support women who have been victims of domestic violence.

Despite what the Opposition Leader says and the way that she casts aspersions, she has been wrong on every point. We are strongly working with those who are victims of domestic violence. We will continue that; there is a lot more to do. However, I believe that every person who is the subject of domestic violence should report it.”