

BOB KATTER

Katter's Australian Party

Federal Member for Kennedy



MEDIA RELEASE

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Katter stands up for mothers at-risk because 'mothers are the greatest people on the planet'

In Parliament this week, KAP Leader and Federal Member for Kennedy Bob Katter stood-up for women in abusive relationships by supporting a bill to ban perpetrators from being able to directly cross-examine victims of domestic violence.

Mr Katter said, "We supported the bill because there are mothers too terrified to go into a court of law with terrible cases.

"To ask a mother who is terrified out of her mind—who is subject to continuous domestic violence of a very physical nature—to go into a court to fight the man who is terrorising her psychologically as well as physically, and to ask her to represent herself in the court or to be questioned in the court by the perpetrator of this brutality just can't be allowed."

Mr Katter also praised the ALP's push, in particularly the Shadow Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus' work, to highlight the need for more funding for Legal Aid. Mr Katter addressed his concerns around funding with the Government directly and only committed to backing the bill following Government assurances.

Mr Katter said, "It's long overdue and we're pleased to see the Government move, and I also strongly believe that the ALP was right in respect to the fact that there needs to be funding provided but the Attorney-General has provided a personal assurance to us that the funding will be provided to enable women to get representation in the courts because some women are too scared of their brutal husbands to go into the courts. The courts fail to protect women at-risk."

Mr Katter told the Parliament, "I don't come here as one of the lily-pad lefts that jump up every time there is a problem and want to solve it by taking tax money and throwing it at the problem. But, in this case, I think there has to be legal representation provided, because the mothers are just too terrified.

"There is no doubt at all that there is still a very serious problem, even though women may have become governors, governors-general, prime ministers of Australia and chief justices of the High Court—and leapt over every other boundary that they could possibly want to leap over. Mothers are the greatest people on the planet. They are mothers of children. But there are mothers that are married to men who are, to put it at its kindest, cowardly dogs."

Mr Katter said that he's had many horrible cases come across his desk over the last 45 years but chose to share one case with the Parliament which deeply impacted him. Of course, he didn't identify the family.

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“There were three little kids involved. The mother came to me a long time after the situation reached a hiatus. I learnt about the situation where the two 15-year-old schoolgirls were living with the school teacher and the mother at the same time.

“The courts awarded two of the children to the mother, but the third child said he wanted to go with the father. The courts awarded custody to the father, and the mother came to me for help in appealing the situation.

“On top of this, the father drove his car at two of the kids, who were on horseback. He drove his car recklessly at the two horses. Whether he was attempting to kill them or just scare them, we don't know.

“When I rang the sergeant of police for the area, he said: 'Shut up, Bob; I know exactly what you're going to say and I have exactly the same feelings. If I learnt that the whole family had been wiped out tomorrow, I would not be surprised. I would be deeply upset but not surprised. We have a 24-hour watch on the house.' “

Mr Katter explained to Parliament the desperate situation the mother felt trapped in and sadly she's not alone.

“She said: 'When I did have the temerity to speak up against the situation, he punched me in the jaw, broke my jaw in two places and sent me flying through a glass door. And, both for physical reasons and for emotional and psychological reasons, I did not speak for nearly three months.'”

“She had to appear in court. She didn't have any money, and Legal Aid said they'd contest the first case but they wouldn't contest this case—the appeal—so we had no Legal Aid. I did everything humanly possible to get some Legal Aid for her but couldn't. I applied to some of my friends to see if they would do it for free. They wouldn't. So I tried to school up the lady to represent herself. She said she would and I schooled her up, but, when the day came for her to appear in court, she was not game to appear in court. I suppose, who could blame her?”

Mr Katter went on to explain a series of heartbreaking events as this case got worse and worse. Mr Katter and his office were able to play a part in taking the child off a 'monster' and reuniting him with his mother.

Mr Katter described that moment, “When we got the phone call that the child had been returned to the mother, all seven employees of my office shouted out, screamed, clapped and yelled in happiness, because we'd fought the battle for seven years to rescue that little kid.

“What damage was done, I don't know and I don't want to know. But, after seven years, we were able to get the inspector of police to move and the child to be restored to his mother.”

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