

# Family Violence Amendment (Protecting People and Their Pets Bill) 2024

*Introduced by David O'Byrne MP*

## Fact Sheet

Family violence can take on many forms. It is imperative that Tasmania's legislation recognises all forms of family violence so that Tasmania's justice system and law enforcement agencies are empowered to respond to, intervene and prevent family violence at every possible opportunity.

Causing injury to an animal, including a pet, can be an incredibly distressing form of emotional abuse or intimidation. Tragically, research shows that it is common for family violence perpetrators to harm or threaten to harm animals including pets as means to intimidate, control, or coerce a spouse or partner.

The Australian Law Reform Commission's landmark 2010 report *Family Violence – A National Legal Response* made a recommendation that injury to animals be included as a form of family violence in each state and territory's applicable domestic and family violence legislation. However, Tasmania is still the only jurisdiction where harm to animals is not explicitly recognised as a potential form of family violence.

This Bill fully adopts this recommendation of the ALRC report and introduces the same approach as is used in Victoria and Queensland.

The Bill provides that harm (or threats of harm) to an animal with the intent to coerce, intimidate or control a person's spouse or partner, is a form of family violence. It achieves this through an amendment to section 7 of the *Family Violence Act 2004*, which includes the definition of *family violence* that is used throughout the Act and is referenced in other Tasmanian legislation.

This allows instances of family violence involving pets or other animals to be treated similarly to other conduct amounting to family violence. For example, this may empower police officers to issue a Police Family Violence Order (PFVO) or arrest a person without a warrant in instances where family violence involving animal harm (or threats of animal harm) has occurred.

National not-for-profit organisation *Lucy's Project* has been a fierce advocate for better supports for people and animals who are experiencing family violence. Their tireless work in highlighting this issue in Tasmania and advocating for reform should be acknowledged.

*If you or someone you know is impacted by family violence, call the Safe at Home Family Violence Response and Referral Line on 1800 633 937.*