Domestic violence is an unspeakable crime and an affront to our society.

Every week, one woman dies in her home as a result of domestic violence. Countless more cases of abuse occur behind closed doors and the effect on children is long-lasting.

As a result of this violence, victims desperately seek safety in our legal system by taking out an apprehended violence order. But our system fails to adequately protect these women. Between January and September last year, nearly one in two domestic violence orders were breached. That’s as many as 11,788.

This number represents a critical failure, one that requires a new approach by our political leaders. Women living in terror deserve better protection than the current illusion of safety.

Labor will implement a new approach to tackling domestic violence, beginning with three steps:

First, **Labor will fix the Liberals’ cuts to women’s shelters**. Under the Liberals’ Going Home Staying Home policy, many women’s refuges have had their funding cut and been forced to close their doors. This has meant that in communities across NSW there has been a loss of specialist services which have supported women fleeing domestic violence for decades. Labor will untangle the Liberals’ mess so women don’t face the life-or-death dilemma of having to choose whether to stay in the home where violence occurs.

Second, **Labor will overhaul the weak penalties for those who breach domestic violence orders**. NSW laws for breaches of domestic violence orders are the weakest of any state. Only 12% of those who breach orders receive jail time for an average of four months. The most common penalty is a bond without supervision. This is unacceptable and represents little more than a slap on the wrist.

Third, **Labor will introduce specialist sexual assault and domestic violence courts**. These courts will be trialed in Sydney, the Hunter and the Illawarra. If successful, a Labor Government will move to a comprehensive rollout across NSW. Women suffering abuse should no longer have to seek justice in the overloaded and impersonal local and district court system. Victims of domestic violence deserve a streamlined system of justice instead of allowing alleged abusers to roam the community while cases languish on court lists for months.