

Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board Bill 2024

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Secretary
Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee

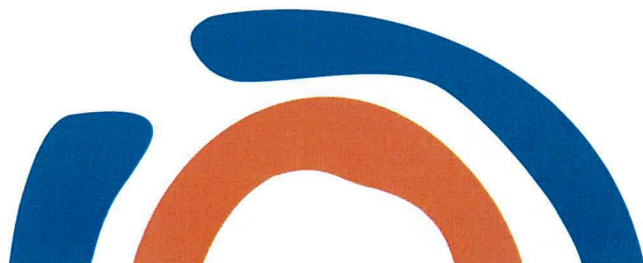
Via email: CSLAC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to review the *Inquiry into the Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board Bill 2024*, and to provide feedback on behalf of the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC). The QFCC has previously provided submissions to the *Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce*, as well as separate policy submissions regarding domestic and family violence, and support provided to victims of crime. I have provided references to our previous policy submissions within this response.

The QFCC supports the appointment of the Victim's Commissioner, and the remit of the Commissioner including to identify and develop additional accessible resources to provide greater access to victim-survivors to understand their rights and navigate the criminal justice system and victim support system and raise awareness of the rights of victim-survivors and the services available to support individuals and families. We appreciate the impact on victim-survivors to engage with a system whilst managing the personal effects of trauma and recognise the intentions of the office of the Victims' Commissioner to identify improvements in how government agencies interact with and respond to the needs of victim-survivors in a sensitive and trauma-informed approach. To date, the QFCC has nominated a representative to participate in the *Interim Victims' Commissioner Stakeholder Reference Group* and will continue to provide our expert advice and assistance to the group.

I have considered the proposed Bill and provide my support. I note the importance of the *Charter of victims' rights* providing definitions for family members impacted by a crime against an individual, understanding that the effects of violence and harm are not discrete, and can have long term impacts on a wider network of affected persons. I also note the intention to provide a channel for raising complaints of contraventions of the *Victims' charter* to the office of the Victims' Commissioner, and for the Commissioner to make enquiries to understand the complaint and provide advice to support the victim-survivor or affected person/s. Such complaints raised to the Commissioner can assist to identify systemic issues which may support the office of the Victims' Commissioner to undertake further work to review practices and recommend improvement to services.



Chapter Four of the *Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board Bill 2024* relates to the establishment of a review board to identify and review systemic issues in relation to the reporting, investigation, and prosecution of sexual offences. In our April 2022 submission to the *Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce*, we highlighted the barriers to reporting as experienced by Queenslanders, including: concerns of the impact of their reporting on their family and friends, other persons finding out about the reported violence and, concerns around the likelihood that a court process would not be successful in holding the perpetrator to account, given the low conviction rate for sexually violent offences. I support the establishment of a review board which will conduct targeted reviews into systemic issues such as those detailed in the QFCC submission, to better support individuals and families impacted by sexual violence, reduce systemic distress upon victim-survivors, and provide meaningful recommendations to improve processes.

I welcome the proposed establishment of the Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board and acknowledge the action taken to implement the recommendations from the reports of the *Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce*, the *Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence*, and the *Inquiry into Support provided to Victims of Crime*.

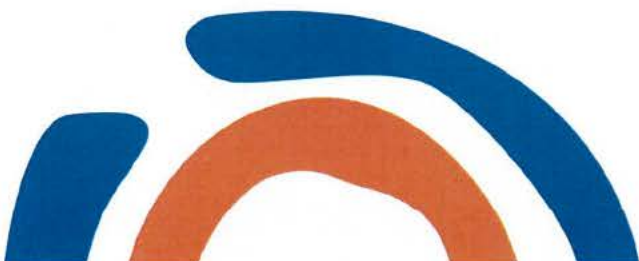
If you have any issues or wish to discuss further, please contact me via telephone on [REDACTED] or via email at [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

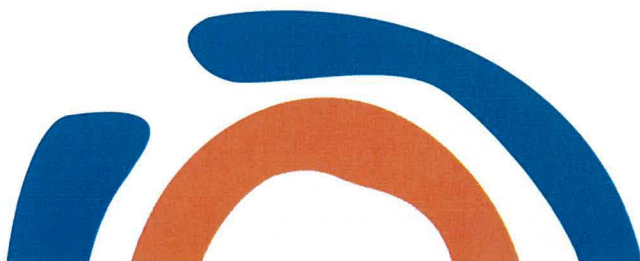
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Luke Twyford
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission

14 March 2024



Date	Title	Summary	Reference
September 2023	Domestic and Family Violence Perpetrator Strategy	<p>A submission considering the actions of primary prevention, early intervention and response, and the systemic reforms needed to improve the experiences of those impacted by family violence, increase perpetrator accountability and behaviour change, and provide long-term support to children and families.</p> <p>The submission included the perspectives of young people including their suggestions for improvements to existing reforms and campaigns, and their thoughts on providing accessible information across a wide community demographic.</p>	<p>QFCC Submission - Domestic and Family Violence Perpetrator Strategy</p>
April 2023	Inquiry into Support Provided to Victims of Crime	<p>A detailed submission into the improvements needed to support timely and accessible supports and services to victims of crime and their families, which respond to the harm they have experienced.</p> <p>The submission highlights the use of restorative justice processes to empower victim-survivors and improve accountability and behaviour change for individuals who perpetrate harm against others.</p>	<p>QFCC Submission - Inquiry into victims of crime.PDF</p>
March 2022	Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce Discussion Paper 3: Women and girls’ experience across the criminal justice system as victim-survivors of sexual violence and also as accused persons and offenders	<p>A submission detailing the difficulties experienced by women and girls who are victim-survivors of sexual violence, beyond the immediate impacts of harm. The submission includes information reported to the QFCC as to the experienced or perceived barriers to reporting sexual violence and the merits of alternative justice models such as restorative justice practices to empower victim-survivors and increase accountability for perpetrators.</p>	<p>Womens Safety and Justice Taskforce Discussion Paper 3 (qfcc.qld.gov.au)</p>



February 2022	National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children	Submission to the National Plan as it relates to the four pillars of action – prevention, early intervention, response and recovery. The submission highlights the intersections of child safety, women’s safety, and family wellbeing where family violence is present, and the importance of recognising children as rights-holders and individuals in the context of family violence and responses to family violence. This includes access to child-friendly and age-appropriate services to address the impacts of harm and offer long-term safety.	National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children (qfcc.qld.gov.au)
July 2021	Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce: Discussion Paper 1	The QFCC submission focuses on the particular impacts of coercive control on children, and the importance of considering children as individuals in the context of family violence and as victims in their own right where coercive control has been perpetrated against an individual or family unit. The submission further details the need for specific child-centric supports for immediate and long-term assistance to children impacted by violence.	Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce discussion paper on options for legislating against coercive control and the creation of a standalone domestic violence offence (qfcc.qld.gov.au)
July 2021	Commissioner’s letter to Justice McMurdo, Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce	Commissioner Natalie Lewis identified the importance of this taskforce in elevating the voices of women and children, who are over-represented as victims of sexual violence and domestic violence. This correspondence to the Taskforce Chair highlighted findings from the <i>Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse</i> , including barriers to reporting child sexual abuse (including delayed reporting of abuse incidents).	Womens Safety and Justice Taskforce discussion paper - Women and girls experience of the criminal justice system (qfcc.qld.gov.au)

