



LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr PS Russo MP—Chair
Mrs LJ Gerber MP
Ms SL Bolton MP (virtual)
Ms JM Bush MP
Mr JE Hunt MP
Mr JM Krause MP

Staff present:

Mrs K O'Sullivan—Committee Secretary

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE SUPPORT PROVIDED TO VICTIMS OF CRIME

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 26 April 2023

Cairns

WEDNESDAY, 26 APRIL 2023

The committee met at 11.52 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open the public hearing for committee's inquiry into the support provided to victims of crime. My name is Peter Russo, member for Toohey and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose lands, winds and waters we all share. With me here today are: Laura Gerber, member for Currumbin and the deputy chair; Jonty Bush, member for Cooper; Jason Hunt, member for Caloundra; and Jon Krause, member for Scenic Rim. Ms Sandy Bolton, member for Noosa, will be joining us in about eight minutes.

This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. These proceedings are being recorded and a transcript will be published on the committee's webpage. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and my direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I kindly ask everybody to turn their mobile phones off or to silent mode.

McLEOD, Mr Aaron, President, Crime and Justice Action Group

CHAIR: Good morning. Thank you for being here. I invite you to make an opening statement of up to five minutes after which committee members will have some questions for you.

Mr McLeod: Thank you for this opportunity to bear witness before you today and to answer your questions that may seek to understand the substance of CJAG's submission to this parliamentary inquiry. Formal complaints are now before the Police Commissioner, the Human Rights Commissioner and the Crime and Corruption Commission. My rebuttal of the health centred approach in my witness statement herewith will be scrutinised; indeed, it sits at the heart of the Queensland government's social economic agenda. Given the modern risk of presumptuous authority advocating for the protagonist corporate agency, ironically characteristic, of course, of the victim shaming we find in the current justice system, it claims personal offence and aggravation as a defence.

Now, I would like to make this commonsense statement. A medical expert of 30 years could not replicate nor engage the wisdom of 60,000 years of expertise bequeathed to an elder on country. A nursing grandmother or a doting grandfather of 70 or 90 years has the fit-the-purpose knowledge worthy of a presumptuous protector of self, kin or neighbour over any health or public safety expert, in my humble opinion. In what sensible opinion could a health centred system over society have wellbeing and good health outcomes better than a wise senior or elder in our suburbs or communities?

How could a community-based detention surveillance system governed by a structure of multiagency panels appointing a secret emergency management system—that is, the MACP system that was passed just recently under the Strengthening Community Safety Bill—protect innocents and victims better than a community-based commissioner model informed by governments of egalitarian principles? The simple answer is: it cannot do better. If authority over a person's health and safety is the first priority of the agency protagonist—public interest—and if this committee supports the protagonist protecting oneself from a privacy breach or a safety noncompliance, in spite of the basic right for a person to protect themselves from harm or suppression with dignity—the agency protagonist, by practical definition, has an exclusive leverage over the basic human rights of the person in order to protect themselves under this presumptuous authority—then we have a problem. Parliament's exploitation of its powers to effect such presumptuous powers in agency protagonists is testament itself to the plight of inhumane treatment of victims of crime by the health centred approach in justice systems and criminology.

The health and safety governance model has become borderline tyrannical by practical definition. Privacy laws provide this power over the rights of a person to the presumptuous protagonist. In such a tyrannical power system, where human rights are as fickle as a cabinet or a prescribed person's decree, freedom has already fallen victim in the negotiations of the presumptuous authority and the protagonist stakeholder for their respective beneficial interest taking priority over the public interest.

The financial interests of victims of crime budgeted for by the Attorney-General, for example, is \$9 million. It is in the Attorney-General's submission to this inquiry. Mind you, this is up from just \$1.4 million paid out to victims of crime last year. Compare this to approximately \$1.57 billion this government has budgeted for offenders to have access to legal aid and justice supports in the 2022-23 financial year. The gap is extraordinary. You can surely get the picture where the beneficial interests have started and continue to flow between the presumptuous authority and the protagonist agency stakeholder. If governance has been directed in the public interest—keeping Queenslanders safe, after all—why is there such a wide financial support gap for victims of crime?

The Crime Impact Survey, which is in our submission, highlights poor service in police attendance and handling of victim impact statements, so please do not take offence when our members and supporters yell or scream in pain or cuss in anger because they have fallen victim to the health and safety doctrine of public safety that has been placed under the Corrective Services commissioner's portfolio at some stage—Corrective Services in charge of public safety!

The government and stakeholder protagonist agreements, ring fenced by commercial-in-confidence and threat of statutory penalty, are controlled by a less accountable parliamentary system than ever before in our history and, sure enough, the journalist spin doctors. Well, we know what happens there. The convicted offender should bear the burden of their own guilt. The nudge theory in practice in government has enabled our justice and parole systems to place dangerous criminals in proximity to our most vulnerable people. These are the recidivist victims predominantly identified in the Crime Impact Survey in our submission—recidivist victims. Who is nudging who—the bureaucrat or the cabinet? Who is in charge of the state—the bureaucrat or the cabinet?

Community-based orders applied by police tempt the fate of a neighbour being bashed or a child being sexually interfered with. This decision must be soul destroying for the good police—knowing the imminent risk of harm is in proximity to children at risk in favour of criminal rehabilitation and medical treatment and tenancy for criminals in residential communities. Is it any wonder that domestic violence funding has been increased by this government to include neighbours and that funding has been pumped up to mitigate the political fallout! Domestic violence is now communal, not just within the family home. Why? Because funding for mitigation is needed by the politician.

Public safety tolerance of a health centred economic model that brings more domestic violence into communal settings and grows the economy of crime, health and justice is not an objective that sits well with victims, especially our elders and our women. Politics sets the standard for a public safety risk framework because it does not apply in a corporate-only environment. Public safety risk is not an international standard for a corporation. That means that actual community safety is a Trojan horse of sorts.

Emergency management does not exist for the control of society unless one is controlled by martial law. Why is this government using emergency management principles to control society without declaring an emergency? Emergency risk management—if managing more dangerous criminality and community-based detention centres is the aim, facilitating the delivery of a health centred approach, then emergency risk is an innovative product of this government. It is not an international innovation—so congratulations! It increases the environmental safety risk for victims.

A detention centre can be gazetted anywhere by the police minister under current legislation. Military drones and more devices connected to 15-minute smart cities are a game changer for agency protagonists and the public. More victims of communal and domestic violence crime are highly probable in this system.

The Crime Impact Survey data attempts to establish transparency of the nuances in these types of frontline impacts on victims by the police agency—the lead protagonist agency of corporatism—through a new window which is presenting fresh knowledge of what is contributing to the serious health and economic impacts to a new criminology demographic—the recidivist victim—created by this government. For this new demographic, the community suffers crime risk exposure and is concurrently disempowered to treat the risk because information and knowledge is ring fenced by statutory privacy laws, safety culture and the nudge theory decision-making models of CEOs and directors-general in departments. Nudge theory—look it up.

Protected by the Public Service agency and the negligence threshold virtually impossible to prosecute, these bureaucrats deploy this nudge theory mantra in principles and operational policies used by prescribed persons in Queensland police, Housing, Communities, DJAG and Youth Justice on the front line set by political targets of the powerbroker. The public are none the wiser. Now they are. Nudge management literature is such a favourite text for the current directors-general in the Queensland government—now experts themselves in the application of this social psychology and behavioural economic theory—that such books are actually published in their own name.

The victimisation economic model demands supply, coercive control and political risk mitigation by the media adviser, and that ensures the public are starved of the critical knowledge and empowerment to manage their own risks with dignity, respect and responsibility. Parent and family empowerment is a threat to the new social construct. Even the Family Responsibilities Commissioner, innovated here by our own Cape York Institute, in Indigenous communities has been disempowered, yet a Voice to Parliament is supported by this parliament. Go figure! We support our Indigenous communities' rights to dignity and self-determination as equals to all citizens.

The health centred centralised model is creating more poverty, displacement and economic disadvantage for victims and the ordinary Queenslanders. Offenders on parole, bail or community-based orders are being protected and cared for, growing the multiagency economy and health centred strategy for the next jobs campaign. Meanwhile, the general public and victims are often forced to relocate. Victims are displaced by the remittance from Queensland police, the department of housing, child safety and communities or youth justice is all it takes to uproot victims—sent out of town and moved somewhere else so the offender can be protected in the community for rehabilitation and health services. Children and families are completely broken into pieces. Victims are left to pick up the pieces themselves.

CJAG appeals to this committee to be empathetic and open-minded to our research in our submission and the significant concern we have with this government's scuttling the human rights of vulnerable people in the name of a health centred approach. It is putting innocent people in harm's way of violent crime drawn by community-based corrections strategies—community-based corrections strategies!

The surveillance state—military drones and cameras everywhere—puts offenders with GPS trackers back in the streets next to our vulnerable people in a unit complex. Of course violence is going to increase! If you want to protect women and vulnerable people, stop that strategy. I can go on with some other matters here, but I am conscious of the time, considering the delay at the start.

CHAIR: The delay will not shorten the hearing.

Mr McLeod: I have a few other matters here that I can discuss, but I want to be respectful.

Mrs GERBER: We have questions.

CHAIR: We have questions but we have time.

Mr McLeod: There are some more points to make, but I think you have the gist of the main story. I am conscious of that. There are some more nuanced detail in there that I wanted to cover, but I will not bother.

CHAIR: If you want to add something, now is the time to do it.

Mrs GERBER: It will eat into your question time.

Mr McLeod: You have a moment?

CHAIR: It is your call. If there is something you want to put before the committee, I suggest you do it now. You may not get another opportunity.

Mr McLeod: The victimisation economic model demands supply, coercive control and political risk mitigation—I have already covered that off. The health centred model is creating more poverty—I have discussed that. Victims are left to pick up the pieces of families. CJAG appeals to the committee to be empathetic. Victims in the general public are leaving cities like Cairns and Townsville—the good people move out and the bad people are given secured and protected tenancy by the government. For the tourism industry in the Far North, you can only imagine what that is going to mean.

These negative impacts are backed up anecdotally by evidence, scheduled in today's hearing, to be given by three brave and extraordinary women. They are known with personal dignity to be Valerie, Leesa and Jackie, who are sitting here behind me at the moment. They are appearing before this committee, having asked me what the point is of getting my story out to the people in my name when it is going to be cancelled by this committee.

Here right now we have a case in point: Valerie is sitting in this room here but her name does not appear on the schedule for this meeting. Why? Because the committee needed to confirm and verify the safety of her name being put out into the public. This committee had to check with her to see whether her name in this submission would be of personal risk to her safety. Here is a case in point of an individual in this room sitting here now who has been through horrific violence who wants to put her name out there in the community, to be a dignified person and to share her story with other people who may be affected by the same problem, but the government is controlling her personal identity.

CHAIR: Aaron, that is not actually the way it works. What happens is that when we receive submissions we have a responsibility to ensure that the people named in that submission are happy for their name to be in there before we publish. That is all. It has nothing to do with government control. It is the secretariat process that we—

Mr McLeod: And that is the problem, Peter.

CHAIR: No, just let me finish. Do not interrupt me. We have to go through that process. We get a lot of submissions, and sometimes we get submissions where people do not wish their name to be known to the public. The process is not to silence people.

Mr McLeod: Twenty per cent of people might be in that position but not 80 per cent.

CHAIR: At the end of today's session, or partly through without inconveniencing everyone, because I am conscious of the fact that we started late, we do have an opportunity for people who have not provided a written submission but who wish to be heard for that to happen.

Mr McLeod: I am just stating a fact, Peter, about the situation at the moment. I am trying not to take away the important message here.

CHAIR: I think we are wasting time. Have you finished, Aaron?

Mr McLeod: I was just trying to complete this now in regard to the three ladies who are here today to tell their personal stories. CJAG has helped and supported these women in our community for them to be heard. I was transitioning into that to say that they are extraordinarily courageous.

CHAIR: I understand that two of them are on the list.

Mr McLeod: Yes. One person is missing, as I was trying to explain.

CHAIR: If that person is here and wishes to give evidence, there is no restriction on that occurring.

Mr McLeod: I just make the point that the presumptuous authority is protecting the information and knowledge that empowers local communities to protect themselves and to act with dignity. If it goes through the gatekeeper of government then all it is going to do is take away the empowerment of our people.

CHAIR: Do you have anything more to add to your written submission?

Mr McLeod: That is it. Thank you very much.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you for your oral submission. I am sorry your opening statement was interrupted with questions, but I am going to ask you a couple of questions now, if that is okay. I wanted to touch on the operation and the effectiveness of the Victims of Crime Assistance Act. That is the act that enables victims of crime to be financially supported.

I note that in your opening statement you touched on the disparity between the amount of government support given to criminals throughout the criminal justice process, and then beyond in relation to rehabilitation and incarceration, and the amount of support that is given to victims of crime. I was wondering if you could expand on that for the committee. In particular, I am interested in hearing from your group about whether the law needs to change around the support that is given to victims of crime when they are the victim of an offence that is not deemed a personal offence. I will give you an example.

If someone's house is broken into and they are in the house, their children are in their beds, they are in their beds and the perpetrator walks past their kids' bedroom, takes the keys off their night stand and steals their car but their person is not affected—there is no physical assault; there is no crime on their actual body—they are not able to claim financial support in the same way as someone who was physically harmed would be able to. I am interested in your view as to whether or not the regime around support for victims of crime needs to be changed so that victims of crime can be better supported?

Mr McLeod: Thank you for your question. There are two aspects: one is the availability of information for people to be able to protect themselves and the other one is financial support once they have been impacted by the crime. The first point was predominantly the nexus of my initial testimony here—the lack of information, the lack of personal dignity for a parent, for an owner of a home—

Mrs GERBER: During the criminal process? Is that what you are talking about?

Mr McLeod: During the criminal process.

Mrs GERBER: Yes, so they are not informed.

Mr McLeod: That is the first thing that needs to be changed. The law needs to be rigorously changed in that space. We have suggested a couple of changes in our submission for you to see in text.

Mrs GERBER: That is very helpful. Thank you.

Mr McLeod: In terms of the financial contribution—I made that very clear in my statement as well—there is a massive disparity between financial support for victims and financial support for offenders. You can see in our submission the overwhelming significant impact financially on victims and how the government have significantly under-budgeted. They have not appropriated at all adequate funding for victims of crime. We are estimating from the data we have collected from a base of statistical primary data—409 people, for example, have responded to our survey—that approximately \$1 billion in damage costs to victims of crime is occurring across the state. What is the budget for the corrective services prison system per annum? It is \$1.17 billion. We have \$1 billion of financial cost to victims for which the government has allocated \$9 million—\$9 million—yet here we have an estimate of \$1 billion as the entire impact of crime consequences.

What is the comparison with the corrective services system, where these offenders could be managed more effectively in an environment where they are not being directly put next door to an elderly person or a disabled person in the community for rehabilitation and health service? The corrective services system, as we have been told, is too expensive. It is a massive burden on the budget, yet here we have some direct primary data now—brand new data. I have not seen any data like this before in the state. We have now, as a voluntary organisation, put this data together for you, in order to have a direct comparison of the impact on victims and the impact of offenders in the justice system, and to hopefully equip you as decision-makers to appropriate more funding and to change the legislation around privacy laws and safety, to bring the dignity back. The presumptive power needs to be returned to the person in the community so that we can manage our own people and we can love and nurture them. They are the two key points. Thank you for your question.

Mrs GERBER: Focusing on the financial assistance and support for victims of crime and the inadequacy of that right now in the system, we are hearing reports that victims of crime are waiting upwards of two years to be supported after they have been traumatised by crime. I am interested in your organisation's perspective on that. Is the assistance being given to victims of crime in a timely way, or is it lacking?

Mr McLeod: Yes, I agree: it is lacking, it is insufficient and it is ineffective—absolutely, yes. Two years is definitely happening, and even more concerning is that victims are not getting any support at all. They get information to say, 'Here is some funding available to you,' and it is a couple of hundred dollars to deal with the assessment process in order for a victim to be determined whether they are eligible for funding at all. In most cases they are rejected. Certainly property crime issues are not even considered in the current scope, so the matter you referred to a minute ago of a person coming in and stealing things and the person being asleep and not knowing that they have come in—

Mrs GERBER: Creeping over their children's bed to get to it.

Mr McLeod:—violating their personal space, knowing that someone has been in the property because things are missing—of course that affects them psychologically. There is no support for them at all.

Mrs GERBER: The other aspect to that is the process that the victim has to go through in order to obtain that support. We have also heard that the victim is not provided with the appropriate support to even initiate that process. We were pointed to another jurisdiction—Victoria—that allows for volunteer victim assist programs. There are volunteer organisations that are supported by government funded organisations which support victims of crime to access the services. I am interested in your view on that, given you are a volunteer organisation and you are pretty much doing that right now in terms of supporting victims of crime.

Mr McLeod: Exactly. That is right. We do not get any funding. If we do get funding, we are concerned that the government are going to bring their presumptive authority upon us. We just want to help people with dignity. We do not want to have to do it on the condition that a bureaucrat tells us that this is when it can be done and cannot be done. In that case there are suggestions that—in our case, we believe that a parent and family responsibilities commission needs to be established, just as it currently exists now thanks to the Cape York Institute here in Cairns, an innovation of the Family

Responsibilities Commission. Unfortunately this government, under the youth justice legislation in 2016, closed them down. All they can do now is provide ad hoc services to parents who voluntarily come to the commission for assistance where they get elders and supporters within the community to help offenders and victims. However, that change in 2016 shut them down from being able to deal with the police, the justice system and the presumptive authority.

This is a critical example of where the victims assistance needs to be delivered through that type of government structure which is community based. That is where the resources and that is where the funding needs to go, where government provide help and assistance; they do not become the control. We need to come back to the egalitarian approach to our democracy and our society; otherwise, we are going to get sick and ill, and it will cost more for the health system to fix us. Please, give the Family Responsibilities Commission their power back to get information from the police and the justice system, and expand that model which the Cape York Institute already has in place into urban areas across the state—particularly in North Queensland, where we have a lot of vulnerable people in various demographic groups. That is the suggestion that I would give to you.

Ms BUSH: Aaron, I think we have had you before our committee on another matter. I thought you were familiar. Thank you for coming here today and for your continued advocacy. It is great to see people helping out others after a significant life event. Remind me: how many people are you supporting and working with at the moment in terms of your victims advocacy and crime advocacy?

Mr McLeod: We have about 160 members and supporters currently that are registered with us. We have provided an advocacy service to about 20 people per month on average. We are getting inquiries through our website now which, fortunately, is getting quite large, and we have a large audience now with about 200,000 people seeing our work each month.

Ms BUSH: A lot of your referrals are coming in through people Google searching?

Mr McLeod: Through the digital platform. We also have victim support meetings in the community on a regular basis. We have victims who physically come to the meetings and receive those supports and get connection with various services and other members and supporters as well.

Ms BUSH: Aaron, you have been very frank with us, which I love. If it is okay, I will be frank with you, too. A lot of these conversations, when we talk about victims, ultimately become about the justice system and about the perpetrator. We have had a lot of inquiries recently around responses to perpetrators. For me, it is really important that we can make sure that we let victims' needs rise in this inquiry. Without talking about the justice system and what it is delivering for perpetrators, what is it that victims want? I have gone through your submission. What are the recommendations that would enhance victim support, based on your experience? I am trying to get to the crux of your views on what tangible outcomes we can seek to improve victim service delivery in Queensland.

Mr McLeod: Again, I come back to the two points: information and empowerment. Personal dignity really needs to be the focus and the aim.

Ms BUSH: What does that look like to you?

Mr McLeod: What that looks like to me is asking somebody a question—being able to check in with them to see what their goals are, what their needs are and what the risks are within their environment. It is to ask them those three questions: what are your aspirations; what are your goals; what is really harming you currently? Then they can give me the information that they choose to give me. Whatever they give me, as a good advocate listening to their needs, I then bring about the necessary resources to deliver their goals and aspirations. That is personal dignity and it provides empowerment, because I am giving them the tools to take responsibility for themselves. That is the key.

Ms BUSH: That is right. I think you are talking about autonomy—giving victims more say and more autonomy in the system.

Mr McLeod: Yes.

Ms BUSH: Is that something that you feel is really important to build into the system response, so with police and with the prosecutors, talking with your victims? Is that what you are saying? You felt there was a gap there. Can you unpack that a bit for me?

Mr McLeod: Absolutely. Victims are not included at all, really, in the investigations currently. The current legislation provides no penalty. It provides no obligation on a police officer, for example, to inform the victim even of the investigation. The legislation talks about it, but it provides no obligation on the police or the prescribed person. It does not give any obligation for them to comply. We have that experience here—Val will tell you that story in a minute—because police are under stress and are under pressure. The behaviours of police, in our experience, at that front line are really appalling.

Ms BUSH: I am trying to ask you quick questions because we do not have a long time, but if you need more time just tell me. Some people have raised in other submissions what would have been helpful for them: to have a book or some kind of information at the start around the criminal justice system—what is coming next, what to expect, the name of the arresting officer or detective. Can I get your feedback on an initiative like that?

Mr McLeod: Definitely. Easy-to-read, easy-to-understand information would need to be provided and packaged. A lot of the people we are dealing with are challenged from a poverty point of view, if you know what I mean. There is a literacy issue in some cases, so providing information in a book is sometimes not effective. You really have to have that commissioner, that advocate on the ground, working with Queensland police—for example, as liaison officers do for offenders. That type of liaison officer needs to be part of the system. That person then provides the information in whatever form is appropriate for the need of the person. We need to empower them in that regard. I suggest the book is a great idea and information, absolutely. I am a strong advocate of empowering people with knowledge.

Ms BUSH: I hear that, thank you. I saw a recommendation around the Victims of Crime Assistance Act, expanding the definition to be 'a neighbour'. Can you tell me a little bit about the rationale behind that recommendation?

Mr McLeod: The rationale behind that is really with regard to the way the prescribed person deals with the victim. At the moment, if the prescribed person is acting on the victims assistance requirement in that act—which they are not obligated to do, mind you—then defining the neighbour as a person who has committed the offence needs to ensure that the definition of a crime takes that neighbour and the dangerous aspects of that neighbour into consideration by the police officer who determines that arrests would occur. Under the current system, if police do not arrest somebody the crime does not exist. There is a clear definition in there. Police are not arresting offenders now. For example, in the youth justice system 55 per cent of youth who come in contact with police because they have committed an offence do not get charged; they do not get arrested.

Ms BUSH: Let's come back to the victims. Expanding the definition of 'neighbour', though—I am struggling, sorry. It might be the flight. The extension of having them recognised as a victim under the act?

Mr McLeod: No, where the victim is subjected to a neighbour committing violence, committing the crime. If the neighbour is committing the crime, which has been acknowledged already by the government, domestic violence generally fits into that category, but the legislation for victims assistance does not cover it. It does not deal with the neighbour—

Ms BUSH: A neighbourhood dispute?

Mr McLeod: A neighbourhood violent act is covered from a domestic violence point of view, but it is not included in the Victims of Crime Assistance Act legislation as it is currently written.

Ms BUSH: Unless it is a personal offence like an assault or something, you mean?

Mr McLeod: Right, for which the police determine that the offence has occurred and they have arrested the person. In this case, that neighbour, in the example that will be given, is under supervision of the state for rehabilitation and support. The police are not arresting them because they do not want them to go back into the system because the objective is to provide health services to that offender. If they arrest them, that person will then go back into the system and they get evicted, for example, from their house; it completely disrupts their world. The police do not want that to happen, so they determine to not arrest the neighbour. This is what is happening in the community. The police have the discretionary power not to arrest. We need to ensure that if it is a neighbour who has committed a domestic violence offence, whether it is a crime or an arrest has occurred, the police have the power to determine that the commission of a crime has occurred, even if the arrest does not occur. Does that make sense?

Ms BUSH: Yes, thank you. That was much better for me, thank you.

Mr KRAUSE: Thank you for your submission. It was very passionate, I can tell. One of the things that I think you touched on was the economy of health, crime and the justice system. I wanted you to clarify that if you could, because it seemed to me you might be saying that the government has some type of agenda to keep money flowing into that economy, as you put it, rather than take action when it comes to dealing with crime and helping victims of crime. Is that what you are getting at when you talk about that economy of health, crime and justice system?

Mr McLeod: Yes. Anecdotally, that is what it is. The data that backs that up is the submissions you see and the reports that come from the academic community. For example, just recently we had a change of legislation in terms of heroin use and ice use. Now people can consume those dangerous drugs and if they get caught a third time they get arrested; is that correct?

Mr KRAUSE: They get three chances.

Mrs GERBER: They get three chances; it is fourth time now.

Mr McLeod: Fourth time now? There you go.

Mr KRAUSE: We did vote against that, Aaron.

CHAIR: Can I just—

Mr McLeod: You are the chair, Peter. I am silent.

CHAIR: Keep going.

Mr KRAUSE: Don't you want to talk about that?

CHAIR: Well, it is not part of the terms of reference of this hearing.

Mrs GERBER: We can still hear from witnesses.

CHAIR: Alright. I have stated what it is.

Mr KRAUSE: I think victims of crime in relation to drugs are quite relevant to a victims of crime inquiry, I would think.

CHAIR: You choose to ask your questions any way you wish, but I am just reminding you that it is not part of the terms of reference of this hearing.

Mr KRAUSE: Would you like to respond to that, Mr McLeod?

Mr McLeod: I am allowed to answer, am I?

CHAIR: You can answer in any way you wish.

Mr McLeod: Thank you for the question. I believe it is relevant, for sure, because priorities have to be made about where funding and economic benefit comes from for the state. There is no doubt, from all of the analysis I have done—I have done a lot of reading and research in this space—that there is a significant agenda around building a social economy. The social services economy in Queensland is a significant part of the overall agenda for the state. Health services is one of the largest economic contributors. Social services is a huge contributor. Generally speaking, government services are a massive contributor. All PAYE tax income is good revenue-raising for the state. Why wouldn't you have that system? It is definitely relevant to the broader context of what the symptoms are that we are seeing in the community now in terms of people being disempowered, because it is not a community-based system; it is a health centred system. The government is advocating for and very proud of taking on a health centred approach to the crime and justice space. It is definitely relevant.

Mr KRAUSE: I think you are seeking a rebalancing of that in some respects. Your point about the amount of property damage that was identified by your survey—I think it was a billion dollars, you said—

Mr McLeod: Collectively, the property damage, the loss of income, the livability costs—all of those costs combined, including the disability cost in itself, by and large. We estimate it to be about \$215 million alone, just in disability financial impact. Collectively it is about \$1 billion, from the baseline primary data that we have collected directly from victims. That is the cost to the state in the next 12 months.

Mr KRAUSE: Sure. I do not think I have time for another one, Aaron, but thank you.

CHAIR: I welcome Sandy Bolton, member for Noosa, who is appearing via video.

MICHAUD, Ms Leesa, Private capacity

CHAIR: Thank you, Leesa.

Ms Michaud: When I was a young girl, my stepfather raped and molested me over a thousand times. The 2009 law states that if the crime was committed prior to 2009, you need a guilty verdict. If the crime is committed after 2009, you just need an arrest to apply to victims of crime. The crimes committed against me were between 1972 and 1982. I was cross-examined in a prerecord and I am not entitled to apply to victims assistance for anything—not even mental health treatment. It should not matter what year the crime happened. Are my rapes any less of a rape because of the year they happened? Is my trauma any less of a trauma because of the years that I was abused?

You finally get the courage to seek justice, only to be told, 'Sorry, it happened before 2009; you are on your own.' The only exception to this rule is that the police cannot locate the perpetrator or the perpetrator is dead. My perpetrator died just before the trial. I contact my victims liaison officer and requested the official court documents stating death so that I could apply for victims assistance. For six weeks I had to argue for the paperwork because that victims liaison officer believed that all I needed was an arrest. I had to get the arresting officer to call her, and she even argued with him. I would like to really say that that arresting officer went above and beyond to go back 40, 50 years and get research to make my story credible. That was Adrian Beezer; he should be promoted. Eventually, somebody in the victims liaison office believed me about the 2009 laws and sent me the paperwork that I was legally required to have.

During my cross-examination, my past medical records were used against me. I should have been appointed a lawyer called Julie Sarkozi from the women's legal office for the protection of private counsel notes. I was not aware of Julie. My children's records were attached to my medical records and my twins have autism. How is it that a sexual predator is allowed to know how many children I have, let alone that I have vulnerable children? The medical records they were reading out actually had a statement written by my doctor in 2013 saying that the perpetrator had molested me in my childhood and this trauma had never been addressed, but they skipped that part—how very convenient!

I should have also been told about disclosure laws. I was sitting there getting cross-examined and the perpetrator's lawyer very smugly said to me, 'You don't know that the crown prosecutor and I share notes, do you, Leesa?' I just shrugged my shoulders and said, 'So what? I have nothing to hide.' I acted calm but I was very confused and I was feeling very alone. Was everyone on the perpetrator's side? Why was I never told this and who was fighting for me?

I have recently been bullied on public social media by the defendant's lawyer, Michael Osborne, who was telling the public what happened in the courtroom when I was cross-examined. He is telling the world that my story keeps changing as he watched my cross-examination and I am not to be believed. It was a closed courtroom, where I believe suppression orders apply in some form. I have never seen nor spoken to this lawyer in my life and I was not aware of his presence in the courtroom. I sent proof of this to the head of the victim liaison office department in Brisbane, Rosemary Cleary. The answer was, 'We don't give advice on legal action. Get a lawyer.' I do not know if this is contempt of court or not. A lawyer thinks it is. If it is contempt of court, then it is supposed to be dealt with by the court within the court. I would have thought that the Brisbane court victim liaison officer would have been able to advise me with a little bit more clarity than 'get a lawyer'.

I am grateful for the Crime and Justice Action Group for supporting me, advocating my story in their submissions and getting this witness statement to the parliamentary committee. Thank you for your time.

CHAIR: Thank you, Leesa.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you very much for having the courage to come before the committee and tell your story and allow us the opportunity to hear how improvements can be made to the system. I think you were in the room when I asked questions before around the financial support needed for victims of crime.

Ms Michaud: Even now that he is dead—Julie Sarkozi is the lawyer; she is doing all the things for me and she can put the submission in. I desperately need to get a psychiatrist and go back to getting mental health help. I stopped everything because it was used against me in court so I was scared to go and do it again. Even when she puts my application form in, they could still reject it because it happened before 2009 so I am not entitled to anything. I relocated over here from Darwin and I was told, 'You will get this,' but nothing.

Mrs GERBER: I am so sorry. You have been failed.

CHAIR: Leesa, you have put your application in.

Ms Michaud: Julie is in the process of working on it now. I have found a psychiatrist I would like to see and I have to get a doctor to refer me. She is going to start with just the medical side of it and see how that goes before anything else. As I said, it is touch and go. They could say no.

Mrs GERBER: How long has this process taken? Can you give us an indication of time frames?

Ms Michaud: I have actually been a victim of domestic violence as an adult where the perpetrator went to jail and it is 18 months, two years.

Mrs GERBER: Part of this inquiry is to look at the time frames around the support, or lack of support, that is being given to victims of crime. We have heard reports from other really brave submitters like you that it has taken upwards of two years for them to any support. I am really interested hearing those testimonies so that improvements can be made.

Ms Michaud: As an adult victim of domestic violence, they helped me with moving costs before he got out of jail. Well, he went to jail so I guess I sort of had a bit more of an upper hand than somebody who just had them arrested and then they did not go to jail. There were some things that were rushed through and then other things just took time, but they did expire. There is an expiry date on getting psychiatric help. If you do not get the psychiatric help within the time frame, the allocated money expires and you cannot use it anymore.

Mrs GERBER: Every victim has their own process they are going through and their own needs.

Ms Michaud: Yes. In 2020 when I went to the police about my stepfather, I think there were still some psychiatric things I was using up until 2020 and I think it had expired by then so I could not use that. I had to pay out of pocket, which is happening now. The psychiatrist I want to see in Cairns will be out of my pocket. I am even more traumatised having been through the court process than had I not done it and just kept it in the back of my head, where it has been for 40 years. The cross-examination is not fun.

Mrs GERBER: I can imagine. It is really difficult. Is there a recommendation that you want to make to the committee? I have talked a lot about the financial assistance side of it. When we are talking about the actual criminal justice process for victims of crime, is there a recommendation based on your own experience that you would like to see happen to improve it for victims of crime?

Ms Michaud: When I told Adrian Beezer, the arresting officer, that they had used my medical records, even he could not understand it. He said, 'I'd have to subpoena the whole Gold Coast hospital if I wanted to do that. How can a lawyer do that?' I said, 'I don't know.' When I asked the crown prosecutor how this was possible, she just said, 'Nothing is private.' That had all of my children's medical records after the first line of what they had read out, so I knew that he had known how many children I had, what they had and all sorts of things. You are not warned that the crown prosecutor and the lawyer are taking notes like buddies—and then to have that thrown smugly at me, like, 'You didn't know that, did you?' No, I did not know that and it would have been nice if somebody gave me the heads-up. You are already on edge and you do not need underhanded tactics like that.

Mrs GERBER: Or to feel like you are on the periphery of your own story. You are the victim. You are the person who suffered that. I understand.

Ms Michaud: I did go in and see one of the victim liaison officers up here in Cairns and she was wonderful, but she did not tell me all of that can happen. By the time I found out about Julie, who protects your counselling notes and will go to court with you, it was too late.

Mrs GERBER: I wanted to let you know that we did get a written submission from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in relation to this committee process. At the start of their submission they note that they are unable to give us a more fulsome or more detailed submission because of the time frames of this committee process, with it being rushed. Unfortunately, from what I can read of this submission, it does not cover what you have been talking about. If we get the opportunity for them to present to us, I will engage with them over that.

Ms Michaud: I will be interested too, because I do not understand. If it is a closed court, I thought you cannot go telling people what happened in there without my permission, and I certainly did not give this lawyer permission to go and slander me.

Mrs GERBER: It all comes back to communication, and part of this inquiry is looking at how the process can better support victims during that criminal process.

Ms Michaud: That is what I thought. Even if she did not know who to send this to about that happening to me, she should have passed it on to somebody who could have said, 'Is this contempt of court? Is this legal?' I should not have to go and get a lawyer to find out if it is legal or not.

Ms BOLTON: Leesa, I am so sorry for what you have gone through in your lifetime. From my understanding, you said you received assistance from the Crime and Justice Action Group. Is that correct?

Ms Michaud: Yes.

Ms BOLTON: In addition to their submission as to the types of things that need improving, is there anything you want to add besides what you have just spoken about in response to the previous question? Is there anything at all that you would like to add where you would say, 'I would also like XYZ to be fixed'?

Ms Michaud: How many times can you arrest somebody? My ex-partner broke the DVO five times and the only reason he went to jail was because I had my phone on record in my back pocket. You could not see anything but you could hear it. They get arrested, they get locked up until four o'clock in the morning, they get let out and the judge says, '\$500 fine. Naughty boy. Don't do it again.'

Ms BOLTON: And you went through that multiple times?

Ms Michaud: Yes. I have all the documentation.

Ms BUSH: Thank you for coming today and presenting. I do not have a lot of questions for you. I think you have done a really great job outlining what has happened to you and I join my colleagues in apologising that this has happened. You have referred to the victim liaison office. Just so I understand, which office are you talking about?

Ms Michaud: That is something else I should say too. It started here in Cairns because that is where the crimes were committed, in Innisfail. That is actually something else—the perpetrator had a terminal illness and I did not know. They will not tell you anything. Had I known, I never would have just messed around with the country court circuit. I would have asked for it to be moved to Brisbane immediately. I got cross-examined in July and then the trial was due for October. He had flown up for the cross-examination but he was then too sick to fly for the trial so they transferred it down to Brisbane and it just gave him time to die, whereas if I had known earlier I would have got my 'guilty' or at least had the opportunity to try to get that. What was the question again?

Ms BUSH: You referred to something called the victim liaison office. Which office is that?

Ms Michaud: The one that I had problems with, where the victim liaison officer would not understand the 2009 law, was Brisbane.

Ms BUSH: And when you say 'victim liaison officer', I assume you mean the actual victim liaison officer role in the DPP?

Ms Michaud: Yes.

Ms BUSH: When you mention you went back to the victim liaison office to get the records that the perpetrator had died, was that the DPP?

Ms Michaud: Yes.

Ms BUSH: She did not understand the relevance of that?

Ms Michaud: For six weeks she argued with me and she just kept sending me pamphlets on how to apply for victims assistance. I was pulling my hair out saying, 'You're not listening to me.' Then I got Adrian, the arresting officer, to ring up. He did not have to do that—the case was closed as far as he was concerned—but he rang her up and said, 'Listen,' and she argued with him. I said, 'See. I am just bashing my head against a brick wall. She won't listen.'

Ms BUSH: So it went to trial and it got referred to a District Court, and he—

Ms Michaud: It never went to trial. I got cross-examined up here in the courthouse in a prerecording.

Ms BUSH: When was that? You mentioned July.

Ms Michaud: 14 July last year.

Ms BUSH: Were you able to participate at all in the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce hearings? In the last couple of years we have had some quite comprehensive deep dives into women's justice and safety issues across the criminal justice system, particularly looking at DV and sexual assault. There are more than 200 recommendations now with the government that we have accepted that will deal with a range of things that you have mentioned around privilege and counselling notes. There are two reports out. I think it would be good for you to have a look at those and it might give you some comfort that some of those things will come.

I have only one other question. Some people have mentioned in other submissions that it would have been great to have an independent office or legal officer or someone who is independent to the DPP, who is charging for the state, who can guide you and give you information and support. What are your views on that?

Ms Michaud: I asked Adrian about that and he said, 'No, you don't need a lawyer.' I had said, 'Do I need a lawyer?' He said no, but I did; I needed Julie. I made Adrian aware of that. This is another thing where it goes back to education and back down to the police force. Now, he did not do anything wrong on purpose; he just did not know.

Ms BUSH: Under the charter they have an obligation to tell you about Julie—but if they do not know she exists, if it does not get as far up as Cairns. Yes, we have definitely identified there is some communication stuff that could be done differently.

Ms Michaud: He was fantastic. If he knew about something then he would have told me.

Ms BUSH: Correct, understood.

CHAIR: Thank you, Leesa, for coming along and thank you for giving your evidence here today.

TEASDALE, Ms Jackie, Private capacity

CHAIR: Jackie, you can make an opening statement if you wish or we can go to questions—whatever you are comfortable with.

Ms Teasdale: Wednesday, 23 November 2022 was the day that I was informed by detectives that my then nine-year-old son had been repeatedly violently raped for a year by another child in the neighbourhood. That was also the beginning of the end of myself as a mother, making choices. We lived in Murray Street, the 118 units. It is the slum of Cairns. My son was raped down the creek next to the police beat and next to Wuchopperen medical centre. My son made his statement and from then there was no support. There was no help. My son was a number and he still is. He is a number because I got a message from Victim Assist asking if my son wanted counselling and they offered it at Wuchopperen medical centre. Clearly, people are not reading what is going on.

This child, this predator, who raped my son has also got three other victims in the same unit complex. That unit complex is owned and managed by Access Community Housing Company. They hold blue cards. The first rape can be dated back to 2020. That boy still lives there. His family still lives there in those units. His family asked for a transfer. It has not happened.

Correct me if I am wrong, because I have worked with children with disabilities and I have a blue card. I have also worked in child care so I know what rules and regulations there are when you hold a blue card. When I brought it up with Access Community Housing that they could have just sent a letter in everybody's mailbox with support services and awareness that there was a child predator in the midst, my son's rape would never have happened and another boy's rape may never have happened.

Since this has all happened, the predator has his family all together. Mine has been torn apart. He has a home. I am homeless with my child, who is traumatised. I have not been told what the charges are. I cannot even get a hold of the police officer, the detective at the CPIU, to find out what is happening. I found out that the perpetrator had been locked up and then he had been released after three months. I found out he was released because he sent an Instagram message to my niece who lives with me. I have had his family come to my doorstep and try to fight my entire family. His parents brought him. That kid is on conditional bail.

Nothing is being done for me and my family. We constantly get picked on by Access Community Housing because I brought up that they have a blue card. The more I try to stick up for my son, the more people try to tear me down, but I will not be quiet. This child, this predator, was in a resi home. He was raping children in the resi home. Then he was released back to his family.

My question is: in 2016, there was the Smallbone report and it said that West Cairns is the second highest ranking suburb in Queensland for youth sexual violence. There were a lot of empty promises made in 2016 when that report came out but here is this kid and he has racked up three or four victims. Child Safety was aware that he was a rapist. Access Housing was aware that he was a rapist. CPIU was aware that he was a rapist.

Mrs GERBER: And he was put back into your community.

Ms Teasdale: And he was put back into the community. I still do not know what his charges are. I do not even know what is happening but I am living in a motel with my kid, with my son. He is so humble. You know what he wants? A house and a puppy. I cannot even give that to him.

Mrs GERBER: I am so sorry for what you have been through, Jackie. Thank you for having the courage to share your story with the committee. I truly am sorry for what you have been through. It is awful. It is absolutely awful. I know you have touched on it, but part of this inquiry is to try to allow victims to have a voice. I know that the time line has been so rushed. I was just told of a heated exchange between committee members and a witness here in relation to the inquiry. How was there any support for your son? Can you tell the committee what happened and whether or not he received any support through that process?

Ms Teasdale: As I said, I was sent a text message from Victim Assist. They said that I can go for a payout or whatever. I am not interested in a payout. That is not where I was going. Then for them to offer counselling at Wuchopperen, that really made me realise that my son was nothing.

Mrs GERBER: Can you explain that, because I am not from Cairns; I am from the Gold Coast.

Ms Teasdale: Wuchopperen is an Indigenous medical centre. It is notorious for their staff telling everybody everybody's business. Wuchopperen is directly—there is the creek and my son was raped there. There is also a police beat around the creek. My son was raped there too. I went to the Women's Centre. Actually, first I went to Access Community Housing because at that point you get told that this has happened to your child and it is not like I did not know that something was wrong. I knew something

was wrong with him. I investigated that personally. As my 22-year-old daughter said, 'Why AM I going to go up and ask my nine-year-old brother, "Have you been raped?" It's something that you should never have to ask.'

I went into Access Housing and the woman from there pushed a tissue box towards me, like that. That was the support that I got from there. I begged her for a transfer. After that, I went to the Women's Centre and I just fell to pieces. I asked them, 'Can you please just get me some counselling for my son? He needs counselling.' I went through everything myself. I got everything myself. As for Victim Assist, he is not eligible for anything because he is not 18, so that was a waste. I cannot do anything to relocate us, so that is that. As a mother, I went to his school. I let the school know and I made sure that there were supports in place for him at school in case he had a meltdown. He choked himself out in the middle of assembly, in front of the whole school, because he just could not cope. I am doing everything for him myself and that is why I am here, because he does not feel like he was helped.

Mrs GERBER: He has been failed.

Ms Teasdale: He has been massively failed. He is the most amazing young man. He is very humble. He has ADHD. He is very kind. I am here for him, to show him, because at that point I did not know what was happening to him. I could not save him at that point. But when I found out I told him, 'I hear you, I acknowledge you and I will fight for you every single step of the way,' so here I am. I am here for him and he knows I am here.

CHAIR: Jackie, I am going to move on to one of the other committee members, if that is okay. Sandy, do you have a question for Jackie?

Ms BOLTON: Yes, I do. Jackie, you are an amazing woman and you have been through so much. What I am not understanding is: did anyone along this journey ever say, 'Right, we can help with everything. Here is the information. We can go here, there'? Was there anyone along the journey, because we have so many advocacy groups, who said, 'We are here to help you along the way,' or was it just that everywhere you went it was just in their particular realm that they could provide assistance?

Ms Teasdale: The only support I have is from the Women's Centre. She put me on a panel, the CHE panel. That is where all the organisations come together and they try to help you. That happened back in November. Unfortunately, my adult daughter was raped in March this year. She went through the same channels as I went through and she got a house in Innisfail within a week.

Ms BOLTON: Out of everything, what would you say is needed more than anything that this inquiry could deliver for you, your son, your daughter, your family? What is the one big improvement that could have made such a difference?

Ms Teasdale: If people had done their jobs. Child Safety swept it under the carpet. There is a newspaper article. You can read it. Staff had to sleep in front of his bedroom door on a mattress to stop him from raping other children in the residential care home. That was in 2020. For Child Safety to go, 'Well, that's okay. We'll release him back to his family'—and CPIU were no help whatsoever. They literally sucked the statement out of my son and just went, 'Here's your broken kid and here's your broken life. See you later.' There is also Access Housing. They are a community-based organisation. There could have been letters. Are you serious? That is a whole unit complex of families. I know that the mother went to them. They were very aware in 2020 that this was happening.

There is Child Safety, CPIU and Access Housing. Something needs to improve. My son's rapist has more rights than my son does. He has a home. He has his family. He has everything. His family gets told what is going on. I do not even know the charges. I am not a stupid woman. I know that one charge is not just a charge; it can branch off into all different things. I need to know that because, at the end of the day, my son was raped. I need to know how I can help my son to become the best version of himself, to grow up and be okay. My son has all the support from my family and everything. Yes, we are homeless at the moment but he knows that I have him 100 per cent. There are kids in those units who have been raped and they cannot tell their parents because they come from a bad home. My fear is that one day there is going to be a kid hanging from a tree because they could not handle what was going on or because they did not have the support, they did not have anyone. I refuse for that to be my child. That is why I am here. Personally, Child Safety massively failed my child.

Ms BOLTON: Just for clarification, Victim Assist said that because your child was under 18 neither your child nor you were eligible for any assistance?

Ms Teasdale: Yes. They said that I could fill out the forms and that they would be processed and anything that he would be eligible for would be put away for him in a trust until he is 18.

Ms BUSH: I will pick up on that, because I think it is important that you do not leave today when I have a chance to say this: the element about 18 years, yes, you can make an application on his behalf. The recognition payment, as I understand, is held with the Public Trustee. He will be eligible now for everything else in that scheme financially. That can come at any age. I would really encourage you to talk. There is a local Victim Assist office. Have you been liaising with them much?

Ms Teasdale: No, I have only spoken on the phone.

Ms BUSH: Do you have regular phone contact with them at all?

Ms Teasdale: No. Basically, after that happened I just did not want to talk to them. It turns you off. It turned me off.

Ms BUSH: That is what I am trying to understand: where is that breakdown happening so that there is not that communication happening? There is a regional office here in Cairns that could be picking that up.

Ms Teasdale: Yes. In saying that, the CPIU should be the ones that tell me—

Mrs GERBER: Give you that information.

Ms Teasdale: Yes, give me that information. That is their job and that has not happened whatsoever.

Ms BUSH: I am so sorry, and you do not have to answer this if you do not want to, but I think I missed the part around how you discovered what happened to your son. Can you talk to that briefly?

Ms Teasdale: On 18 November I was visited by two detectives. They said that there had been an assault and asked if they could talk to my son. There was no urgency. They did not tell me that this happened. Then it was not until 22 November that the detective came and said, 'There has been a boy who has been sexually assaulted in these units and your son's name has come up as a victim in his statement.'

Ms BUSH: So it was the CPIU that notified you?

Ms Teasdale: Yes.

Ms BUSH: They have taken a statement but that has been the length of the information. You mentioned as well that you did not want financial assistance, when Victim Assist reached out to you. What is it that would be helpful for you?

Ms Teasdale: At that point I rejected it because you are going through everything. I am a single mother. I have eight children and I am a very active mother. They were texting me and calling me, hounding me. I am thinking, 'I just don't need this right now. I don't need you to talk to me about this right now.' At the end, my son wanted to be relocated and so I have called them and asked them. That is when she has told me, 'We can't help with any of that. It must be put in a trust until he's 18.' I said, 'Fine, done. I'm finished.'

CHAIR: This will be the last question for this session.

Mr KRAUSE: Jackie, thanks for coming in and sharing with us. I am sorry for what you, your son and your daughter have been through. You mentioned there were three other victims that you were aware of in the same block of units.

Ms Teasdale: Yes.

Mr KRAUSE: Do you know if the perpetrator is still living in that block?

Ms Teasdale: The perpetrator does not actually live in the unit block. He lives doors down.

Mr KRAUSE: You also said that you were of the view that the police, Child Safety and other agencies are aware of all of these allegations but there has not really been any action taken at all to support those victims or notify them.

Ms Teasdale: No.

Mr KRAUSE: You are not aware of any charges that have been laid at all?

Ms Teasdale: I know that there are charges, but I have no idea what they are. I have requested the transcript from the court. I have gone to the courthouse when the perpetrator has had court. I have been told that it is a closed court and I cannot go in there. I have emailed and called the police officer, the detective, and I have asked him for the transcript and the charges—all the information on my son's case. I have not got anything. Finally, I went into the police station on 10 March and I requested the transcript from his court. I went in with my QP number and I was told that I could not get that information.

Mrs GERBER: The transcript of it being finalised? So it was finalised and you do not have any—

CHAIR: No. They do not know.

Ms Teasdale: No. I just wanted anything.

CHAIR: Can we be a bit careful of the sub judice rule, please?

Mrs GERBER: I guess that is what I am getting at, Chair—if it has been finalised.

CHAIR: No, it has not been finalised; is that right?

Ms Teasdale: No, it has not been finalised, but just to know what the charges are and stuff like that. That is all I wanted.

CHAIR: Jackie, thank you for coming along today and for giving your evidence. I am conscious of where we are going.

CUTHBERT, Mr Shane, Private capacity

CHAIR: Shane, you have been here watching what is happening. Do you want to start with an opening statement, after which the committee will have some questions for you?

Mr Cuthbert: I would, yes, thank you. I have made a written submission to this inquiry as well.

CHAIR: Yes, you have. Thank you.

Mr Cuthbert: I am aware that a lot of that stuff has probably already been looked at or will be at some point in time. There were a few things that I wanted to touch on personally, from my own experience as a victim of crime of a sole perpetrator in the past. Victims need support. When they do not receive that support, quite often what we see is those victims can be criminalised.

I invited a friend of mine, Debbie Kilroy, who you probably are all aware of, to Cairns a few days ago. I introduced her to a friend of mine, Rob Pyne. We organised a deputation to the Cairns Regional Council to talk especially about the cases of youth who are criminalised. Some of these youth have experienced quite significant traumas. They have been victims themselves of abuse. Quite often what happens when victims are not given enough support is that they turn to drug use and criminal behaviours. We see them in the courts and things like that.

My friend Debbie spent some time in Boggo Road jail. As a female offender in prison, she was in there with other females and they had children in there. What I thought was very interesting was: when a new supermax prison was built in Brisbane, it had a capacity of 12. These were the most violent offenders in Brisbane and in Queensland. Eight of those were children who had spent time in Boggo Road prison. Another friend of mine in New South Wales, Russell Manser, spent a lot of time in prison. He brought to my attention the study that was done into some of the most violent offenders and serial killers in Australia. There was a common theme there. They had spent time in Grafton prison, where they were brutalised. I have also spent time in custody. I have met many of these young kids who have turned to criminal behaviours to support their drug addictions. They are stealing to get by. They are people who come from circumstances that are quite traumatic. There is a lot of trauma in their lives.

When I first moved to Queensland I had a schizophrenic neighbour who lived on my street. He was known to me. I woke up, with my wife at the time, with this man standing above us in bed. My wife did not have clothes on. I had very limited clothing on. This guy was holding a torch above us. I rose out of bed to confront this person and he assaulted me. As a male victim on that occasion I was not given any support. I was not offered any counselling or psychological help. My expenses were paid to fly to Mackay, where I was to testify against this person. I was not given any support in court. I was called the night before by the police prosecutor basically to run through my statement and make sure that I was ready to go.

I have experienced a lack of support there as a victim on many occasions as that is not an isolated occasion—support that I think would have been well needed. I sustained injuries. Some of my teeth were knocked out and that sort of thing. I have had to pay for that out of my own pocket. The police officers themselves were helpful. At the time, I must admit, I did not ask for any support. Also, as a victim and a male victim, I felt that there was a stigma. I have gone to the police before about incidents and things that have happened. I have really been mistreated. Some of that has been put into my written submission so I do not want to talk too much about it and rehash the same thing. I think my submission is unique in that I have been a male victim and there is some stigma and bias attached to that.

I do not expect every police officer or DPP officer or anyone in the criminal justice system to be trained overnight and trauma informed. I know that that is probably something that is really unrealistic. But if I could put a useful recommendation to this inquiry it would be, as I have suggested in my written submission, for a third-party agency, possibly a volunteer organisation, that is funded or supported by the Queensland government where victims can have their hand held through those processes and ask questions and get referrals to support—mental health support, physical support, financial support. What I am hearing is that there is a general lack of that support.

Police are busy. A police officer comes out and will take your statement and they do not have time to follow up with all of the victims the next week. It is the same with police prosecutions and the DPP. There is another issue there where there is a lack of communication between all of them.

Something that I think really affected me personally was that you have to relive that trauma. It is sad to see that, even today, we have people reliving this trauma and have had to speak to the police about it. Then there might be a special investigator or a detective team and they have to relive that trauma and speak to them. Then they have to talk to the prosecutor, the lawyers—all of these people. If you have something quite traumatic in your life and are having to rehash that over and over again, I

think it would be good to have a third-party service or someone who could really hold your hand through that process—someone who knows what you are going through, who can speak to you about it and then also be in a position where they can speak to lawyers and the police and the DPP and that sort of thing, to really enhance the communication between the agencies and also the support that you need as a victim.

I am in court quite a bit. I have just finished my law degree. I have a lot of friends who are lawyers, especially in the criminal justice system. Legal professionals as well as those appointed by courts do not understand trauma. We find that they do not understand what the victims are going through. I have done a bit of trauma informing myself, I can tell you that, in the Cairns courthouse with friends of mine. You are a number. We see this quite often. I really think we need to look at this with a very practical lens and take a practical approach and make sure that we are doing something to create a better system and make positive changes.

I also think with having a third-party organisation and what that looks like: maybe as soon as a police officer logs a job or something like that, they are getting a phone call or a liaison person is going out to meet with that victim so that it is a proactive response as well, not waiting for the victim. As I mentioned before, I did not seek support and I did not seek help. I felt ashamed. I wish someone had pulled me aside maybe and said, 'Hey, how are you going, mate?' There is a lack of that. I am a male victim. There is a lot of bias and stigma around that, and I think that needs to change as well. I would like to see a proactive approach where, as soon as there is a job logged—it might even be a victim liaison officer, someone who is trauma informed, attending with the police, because we know the police are not trauma informed. I have dealt with some really great officers but I have dealt with some who are hopeless, so to speak. That is the nature of the beast, I guess. I would really recommend that the committee considers what another organisation or a volunteer organisation looks like. We have services like Lifeline which are completely volunteer-led in the space of mental health and suicide. I think we can do something like that or similar for victims.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you, Mr Cuthbert, for coming here today and for giving us your personal testimony as well as your written submission, which is really comprehensive. In your written submission you essentially call for the system to be overhauled in relation to support for victims of crime.

Mr Cuthbert: Yes.

Mrs GERBER: You have articulated today in your oral statement how you would like to overhaul or where you would like to begin. You would like to begin with a body that specifically targets support for the victim of crime. We have been directed to the Victorian jurisdiction, where they have established—and it is volunteer based—a coordinated government response to victims of crime. They have established a volunteer organisation that essentially does hold the hand of victims of crime through the process and beyond. In Queensland at the moment, I think there is a limitation period on when you can get support. Once the criminal has served their sentence—and I think it is six years; I am sure they will correct me if I am wrong—then it kind of drops off for the victim of crime. It is not an ongoing thing. We know that victims of crime can sometimes suffer with the results of that criminal action for the rest of their lives. Can you talk us through, from your experience, what this body should look like in terms of the support that needs to be given to victims of crime?

Mr Cuthbert: Why I brought up young people and why young people turn to criminality and behaviours like that is because trauma is a lifelong thing. Those children grow up to be adults still dealing with that trauma and unable to cope. We see it. I have been physically sexually assaulted as a young person. It created a lot of barriers and hurdles for me in my own life. They are things that I am still dealing with now. I am a 32-year-old adult male and I have a lot of pain and trauma in me, which is why I am trying to help others.

Mrs GERBER: So there needs to be no time limit on it?

Mr Cuthbert: Yes, exactly. There are a lot of people I speak to, particularly male survivors of institutional abuse and sexual assaults as children, who have spoken out 26 years or 36 years later, when the perpetrator has been deceased for quite some time, because you do not want to talk about it. You do not want to relive it. I know that makes it very hard for services to action if we cannot talk about it and nobody knows what is happening. I do get that.

Mrs GERBER: But when it comes to the point of being talked about, if there is no support—

Mr Cuthbert: You need to know that when you put your hand up for that support it is there, because it takes lot of guts and it takes a lot of courage for someone to stand up and say, 'This happened to me. I want to do something about that.' For someone to turn around and say, 'Sorry,

you're outside of the limitation period' is distressing for people. It takes you a long time to get to that point and to speak about it. You do need that support, yes.

Mrs GERBER: Thanks, I appreciate your submission.

Ms BOLTON: Mr Cuthbert, thank you so much for your written and oral submissions. In amongst that support and the, I suppose, almost one-stop shop that is there assisting the whole way, you also raise the importance of improved communications between government departments, the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions. We have heard from a previous witness about when someone is not doing their job. What does that communication look like? Do you think the one-stop shop could assist with those communications? In previous hearings we have heard about the need for an information officer—somebody who can report back to a liaison officer—and also a portal so that people can access that. Is that how you would see it working or are you thinking of something else?

Mr Cuthbert: I think they definitely need to have that ability to communicate and liaise with the lawyers, DPP, police. They really need to facilitate that communication. I think that would be ideal. It would be ideal that with that one-stop shop you are dealing with one person: you have come to know them, built a relationship with them, shared your trauma. I do not know if I did mention it before, but having to relive your trauma over and over again with 15 different people is difficult. It does not get easier. I think if you do have that one-stop shop then you have someone where you know they can pick up the phone and they can call the DPP and find out what is going on without you having to be proactive yourself.

I can tell you, when you are feeling vulnerable and feeling like a victim then you are not proactive. Yes, there are some people who are but you are not. You are not saying, 'I'm going to go out here and make sure this happens.' We see it in the domestic violence space. We see that where people are not proactive. That is why we have invested so much money into services to support victims of domestic violence. Why are we not also supporting victims of other crimes, whether it is a home invasion or if your car got stolen?

I have just finished law. I am just finishing off psychology. I am doing a double degree. One of the main things I learned in my first year of psychology is that we do not treat the trauma; we treat the client's reaction to that trauma. You could have two people involved in a car accident. One walks away but never wants to get in a car again. The other person spends six months in hospital and they jump in the car the next day. I think what we really need to do there is—whether someone has assaulted you or sexually assaulted you or whether they have called you a name or they have just been in your property. They may not have physically touched you while you are sleeping or something like that, but that can still be traumatic for somebody. I think the way it currently operates is that we are looking at somebody's trauma and we are saying, 'That's not traumatic enough for us to provide you with support.' I think that needs to change. We need to change that lens, where everybody who experiences trauma should be treated the same and offered those same accesses as everybody else.

I know in our community in Cairns we have a lot of break and entering happening. I have spoken to many members of the community myself. I have gone to all the crime forums. I have spoken to a lot of people. Yes, they may not even have seen the perpetrator. They wake up the next morning and their car is gone, but they feel violated just the same. They stay hypervigilant and cannot sleep at night anymore. We cannot say, 'That's not traumatic because they didn't physically harm you.' We know that psychologically that is still harming them.

Ms BOLTON: Do you see a role for restorative practices and justice in the mix as part of trauma informed?

Mr Cuthbert: Yes. With my own lived experience and my own personal experiences I am across, I guess, many areas in that respect.

CHAIR: We have time for one last question and then we have to move on to the next witnesses.

Ms BUSH: I will keep my question brief. I am looking at your written submission mostly at the moment. If it is okay, I will ask you a question about that.

Mr Cuthbert: Yes.

Ms BUSH: Drawing on your experience of the prison system, the Charter of Victims' Rights in Queensland places certain obligations on Queensland government agencies to meet charter principles, including to treat a victim with dignity and respect, give them information about the court case, refer them to services, let them know of any financial assistance that might be available. Can you comment on how that is implemented and how that works or does not work in a prison context for someone who has been harmed within prison?

Mr Cuthbert: I was treated quite horribly. Yes, there is a lack generally—I have been a victim outside of prison and I have been a victim in prison. Obviously, as you can imagine, it is probably no surprise that, being a victim in prison, the amount of support you are going to receive is not a lot. I was sexually assaulted by someone with a knife. It was quite traumatic for me. I did speak with the detectives from the Corrective Services Investigation Unit about that.

Ms BUSH: Shane, I have read your submission so if you do not want to repeat that, you do not have to. I was interested in how they responded to meeting those charter obligations, or you can continue. I just did not want you to feel like you had to go on.

Mr Cuthbert: I just think there is a lack. Obviously those practices are in place, but I do not think they are followed. We have heard even today that there are other victims who did not know what support was available. No-one offered it to them. It was only if they went and actively sought out that help that it was there. Yes, it puts pressure on the justice system, the policing and all of that, but they have to work together and they need to remember that they are there for the victim and it needs to be victim-centric. I personally have experienced an extreme lack in that circumstance, as you can probably imagine as well. I experienced some trauma there that took a lot for me to deal with and it still makes me emotional.

Ms BUSH: Obviously, one of the aspects is having to even report that type of crime, and I imagine that is not easy in prison.

Mr Cuthbert: I did so when I was a member of the community after I was released. I was held in custody for six months for offences that were withdrawn by the police prosecution; no evidence was offered. I was an innocent man in prison for six months where I was raped and tortured and went through extreme trauma. I spent most of it in solitary confinement; 4½ months of that was in solitary confinement, in and out of hospitals. They could not keep me safe. My experience is not unique. I think it is important for the committee to know that this happens a lot, and quite often people who are in that system do not talk about it. They do not speak up; it is even harder. You can become more victimised for reaching out and speaking out. We still see that in the community now as well, especially in the domestic violence space. People are afraid to reach out and talk about it and ask for help because they are afraid they are then going to be a victim of further crimes or escalated crimes.

CHAIR: Thank you, Shane.

SCHWARTZ, Ms Thelma, Principal Legal Officer, Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service

CHAIR: Welcome, Thelma. I am not sure of the proceedings you have seen. We ask people to state their name and organisation.

Ms Schwartz: I am Thelma Schwartz, the principal legal officer of the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service. I have been a lawyer going on 23 or 24 years of practice this year. I am currently with the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service, having been their principal legal officer since 2015, bar four months away.

CHAIR: Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Ms Schwartz: The committee has a copy of the written submission provided by QIFVLS, which I formally read into the transcript. It is publicly available. In relation to who QIFVLS are, you will see that I set out that QIFVLS is a family violence prevention legal service representing the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and sexual assault. We have offices across the majority of the state, from Brisbane in the south-east right up to the Torres Strait, providing services right up to the international border with Papua New Guinea. We service out to the gulf communities, Doomadgee, the Gulf Country. We service Cape York communities and in between. We then service along the east coast of Queensland. In theory, we service and support 80-plus communities in Queensland.

Our practice areas are domestic and family violence, child protection, sexual violence matters and family law matters. We were specifically created when it was identified by the Commonwealth that there was a gap in services for victim-survivors, particularly First Nations victim-survivors. QIFVLS is a proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisation. We are funded primarily through the Commonwealth to provide these specific services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors.

Sitting here before you today, I have heard a bit of the back end of those very powerful submissions, but I am here, with respect, to remind the committee that there is a place and there must be a need to provide ongoing support for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and sexual violence. I do not need to speak to the converted on this. Unfortunately, the statistics are overwhelming in relation to the plague of domestic and family violence and sexual violence that impacts the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivor and the ongoing effect that a victim-survivor who is going through domestic and family violence as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person will then endure, with children being removed, entering our child protection system, entering our youth justice system, entering our criminal justice system.

What is missing though in this rhetoric—and I think there is a bit of a misnomer, with respect—is that the system is not designed for victims. People have a misconception that police and the DPP are there to speak for them as victims. They do not. They are there to speak for the state. Victims do not have a space in the criminal justice system. They are not a party to proceedings but it is proceedings about them. They do not have a way to influence and speak to the direct impacts of a crime.

You heard very powerful testimony from Mr Cuthbert about trauma. We see trauma also in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim lens—the ongoing effect and impact of trauma. What we see with the system, though, is that our criminal justice system is not designed to see and respond to trauma. Hence you see a movement or a push that does not meet the needs necessarily of victim-survivors, which is unfortunate, but these are the current realities that we are in. How do you create a space which is more victim-centric, where victims can feel that they have a platform to speak, to be heard, to be part of—

Mrs GERBER: To be helped.

Ms Schwartz: That is correct—to achieve justice. Justice has many different lenses. Sometimes justice for a victim-survivor is, 'I've been heard. Someone's actually believed my statement. That's all I wanted.' Sometimes justice for a victim-survivor is to take that matter all the way through to finality with an outcome and they have fully participated and they have had a sense of control over those proceedings. I think we are in a timely space here in Queensland to do this.

I served as a task force member on the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, and you can see it referenced quite heavily in QIFVLS's submission, particularly report No. 2 on women's and girls' experiences in the criminal justice system. On first blush, people in community might say, 'That's a very gendered approach'—with respect, the terms of reference provided by the Attorney to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce were gendered—however, the recommendations that were made have a broadbrush approach, and those 188 recommendations that were made have been

considered by the government and have been accepted either in whole or in principle or been put on the side burner. You have an implementation framework to see the implementation of not only report 2 but also report 1, which dealt with the criminalisation of coercive control and creating a system where domestic and family victim-survivors felt safer with the creation of a criminal law offence. Those are my opening remarks.

CHAIR: Thelma, you touched on a very important point in relation to our criminal justice system representing the state; it does not represent the victim. The Human Rights Commission is also looking at how it can implement some improvements in relation to the way victims are looked at. Again, it comes down to the charter and where the charter should sit. Do you have a view on where the charter should sit?

Ms Schwartz: Given that Queensland has recently implemented the Human Rights Act, I believe it is time to review where it sits. It probably aligns now within the ambit of the Human Rights Commissioner, given the broad range of human rights that we have here in Queensland that are reflected. I cannot remember when the review of the human rights—

CHAIR: It is in July.

Ms Schwartz: There you go. We are in the right framework to roll this into a review and look at the scope of the Human Rights Commissioner and the act. I was listening quite intently to Mr Cuthbert in relation to prison and what was going on within that ambit. There is also the Inspector of Detention. That is meant to be coming online I believe very soon.

Mrs GERBER: It should be already online. It is delayed. We are still waiting.

CHAIR: I think we have started the debate but it has not been finalised.

Ms Schwartz: That is correct. There are a number of moving pieces in this framework. What we have is a very quick evolution. We are rolling very quickly. Unfortunately, it is setting up the pieces to move with change and to meet the expectations of our community—and especially victim-survivors—that they have a space, they can be heard and they will be respected when they make complaints to police. It is more than just making that complaint to police, as we heard from Mr Cuthbert; it is about the continuum of the criminal justice spectrum. In that respect, we have picked up on one of the key recommendations in report 2 of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report on having a victims advocate that is attached to the complainant and takes them all the way through. What we saw in the sexual violence spectrum, for example—you heard the level of shame. It is there. It is alive. Trauma is alive. Then you have to confront having to navigate and negotiate with prosecutors, with police. It could be done in a manner that is not culturally and trauma informed, further compounding your psychological harm.

Mrs GERBER: Your written submission is really great, thank you. Thanks for all the references bringing it back to the task force. I wanted to bring you to recommendation 18 as well as recommendation 9. Recommendation 18 is the victims commissioner and recommendation 9 is the advocate that you just spoke about. Our understanding of how the victims commissioner will work is that it will be an advocate role, primarily. It is not going to be centred around the victim. The victims commissioner themselves will not be holding the victim's hand, as we have heard might be needed. In terms of the victims advocate, do you see that as the avenue to be able to provide the one-stop shop that victims might need? Where do you see the victims advocate sitting in relation to the structure? Do you see it sitting within the Human Rights Commissioner or do you see it sitting under, say, the victims commissioner and the victims commissioner then sitting within human rights perhaps?

Ms Schwartz: I think the recommendation from the task force was to create an independent office of victims commissioner. You may then say that, in terms of infrastructure, it makes sense—if we are going to reimagine the Human Rights Commission in this process—for it to sit, instead of duplicating services and resourcing within the Human Rights Commission. Alternatively, if you were going down the pathway—and we know the government has accepted in principle the creation of a victims commission—it could sit within that. The role of those advocates—

Mrs GERBER: But it needs to be independently funded and provided for within the budget. That is what you are saying?

Ms Schwartz: I would definitely recommend that it be independently funded. When you look at the system, where are police going to take that on? Where is anyone in the current system going to be able to afford it? We know, looking at what has come out of the police commission of inquiry, that over 40 per cent of police callouts are domestic and family violence related. They are already stretched. There are a number of key recommendations they need to implement. Where across the system do you put another mechanism to hold a victim's hand, with respect? I think it needs to sit outside. There

needs to be a level of accountability that cannot necessarily come from being internally placed. You have external eyes to hold parties accountable. With respect, that is what is missing. There is a lack of accountability. How can you justify victim-survivors having to take the impetus to drive certain things when in theory there should be victim liaison officers assisting them?

Mrs GERBER: That are providing that information and assisting them through the process, yes.

Ms Schwartz: If there is something there, why isn't it working? What are reviews saying about the utility of current officers who might be attached? Are they overworked or have they not been allocated? I do not know those answers.

Ms BOLTON: Regarding your submission in terms of the one-stop victim support agency and a culturally safe support service, how do you see that sitting in the mix of everything you have just been speaking about?

Ms Schwartz: It becomes a must, with respect. There are people within our community who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons. You have people from the CALD community. You have people who are neither of those cohorts. However, we have specifically recommended a cultural focus because for everyone who might come through—especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons, we have enough reports to say that we respond better with certain supports that are designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons. I think it is good sense to build in a cultural framework that acknowledges that given that, in our business as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisation, this is the basics to how we engage with clients who see us. They have multifaceted problems. We are talking not only about intimate personal violence; we could be talking about community and lateral violence and, even further down, sexual violence. We have skill sets as a specific Aboriginal and community controlled organisation to bring that out and understand how to elicit that from our clients who are unique to us. That is why we have recommended that consideration be given to adding in that element of cultural focus for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons.

Ms BOLTON: Regarding restorative practices and justice, what are your thoughts about the value in them?

Ms Schwartz: There is value in it provided both parties—it is a safe format to do this. If you are doing it within a domestic and family violence situation—if it is pretty serious violence—you have to make sure that it can be controlled and that parties feel safe, particularly the victim of that violence. I think that we should be exploring these alternatives to coming into the criminal justice system and also holding perpetrators of crime accountable, because I do not think there is a real appreciation of accountability from a victims lens. They need to really appreciate that. You do not really get that. You might get it, some would say, from a victim impact statement, but those are words on paper. I think it has more meaning if it is being delivered by a victim relaying, 'Actually, this is how your actions impacted me and this is what I now live with.' They are my thoughts on that particular aspect.

Ms BUSH: I have read your submission and I am aware of your work as well on the *Hear her voice* report, so thank you for those. I wanted to pick up on your last comment around the reading of victim impact statements. Obviously victims have the option of reading aloud their victim impact statement. In your experience, is that something that happens in practice?

Ms Schwartz: Unfortunately, no. When I was in criminal law practice, it was quite standard—and I worked as a criminal lawyer for close to 10 years—for a written victim impact statement to be tendered in the absence of the victim. That was the stock standard. There was never any talk about the victim being present to deliver it. I think there needs to be a fundamental shift. I think we need to empower victims if they choose to have that. That might be part of the justice that will allow them to move on and deal with what they have experienced as a victim-survivor of a criminal offence.

Ms BUSH: I think what I am hearing you say is having that suite of options for victims, recognising they are not a homogenous group?

Ms Schwartz: That is correct.

Ms BUSH: Excellent. There are a lot of recommendations in both of those reports and some of them do have potential for broader benefits for victims if they are implemented or if the pilot goes well. I want to touch on the recommendation for a victims advocate. Some submitters have suggested that perhaps it would be better to provide funding to embedded NGOs in community to deliver those victim advocacy pieces rather than having one central agency sitting in Brisbane coordinating that. I just wanted your views on the two different models.

Ms Schwartz: Given that Queensland is a decentralised state, I think it makes sense to sit it within community organisations as opposed to having it centralised in Brisbane. That may work. It may provide faster access to people coming into that hub and asking for assistance. We would certainly

support that community-based modelling being available in our regions. However you fund it or however you direct it, at least people will know through advertising, getting it out and about: 'Here it is. This is the role.' You need to do a certain body of work in messaging about the availability of this advocate for them.

Ms BUSH: Some of the information I have heard today suggests that the mapping of victim services and who is doing what and who knows about whom might be a bit thin. Can I get your views as a practitioner in Cairns on what that looks like here?

Ms Schwartz: I agree. Before we embark on this, I certainly would be recommending a mapping of existing services—what is your catchment area?—and then looking at any gaps. I think the ultimate aim should be avoiding duplication. We want to make the best of funding that is available to support victim-survivors. If you can wrap around a service—I think some of the frustrations we hear from our clients are, 'I have to go here and then I have to go here and then I have to go here.' How can you almost deliver a one-stop shop?

I am just picking up on Mr Cuthbert's comments about trauma and having to retell the story and over and over again. You might then need to think about information-sharing mechanisms so that it protects the victim-survivor from the retelling of that narrative. You have a couple of forms that support this journey, including authority to release information, so it benefits that victim-survivor and it minimises the impact of trauma on them. That is what we get with our clients: retelling and retelling. Then you get to a point as a victim-survivor when you are like, 'I am disengaging. This is too much. This is all I'm going to be doing again? I don't want to do this anymore.'

Ms BUSH: I imagine there would then be issues around capacity as well sometimes of NGOs and who has—

Ms Schwartz: Yes.

Ms BUSH: Thank you so much. That is useful.

Mr KRAUSE: Ms Schwartz, thank you for your submission. On recommendation 8 from the task force that you referred to, on page 7 of your submission, in relation to the restorative justice recommendation, I see the different points you have set out there including the opportunity for victims and offenders to go through a restorative justice process, as it were, to maybe some sort of agreement between them. We have spoken about this as a committee with someone from the Queensland Law Society who raised this issue with us. Say this was put into practice, in a situation where that process leads to a downgrade of a charge or a plea bargain or even a discontinuation of a charge, do you agree that that outcome agreed to through that process—not the entirety of the process and everything that was said and done but the outcome—should be made public? I will finish my question with a statement: in the interests of there being openness in the justice system in terms of what is actually being the outcome of a criminal process where someone is charged with a crime.

Ms Schwartz: I am pausing. Sorry, Chair.

CHAIR: The member for Scenic Rim is referring to where you do mediation. The mediation between the two parties is held to be confidential.

Ms Schwartz: Yes.

CHAIR: There has been some discussion about whether that system should be looked at to being changed.

Mr KRAUSE: Yes, if there is an outcome and there is an agreement reached and it leads to a discontinuation or a plea bargain of some type. In the ordinary course of events, if that happens it would be on the record through prosecutor statements or something before a judge. I am asking you if not the entirety of the process but the outcomes of the process should be made public in the interests of transparency of the justice system.

Ms Schwartz: I believe the outcomes, definitely, but nothing leading up to how those outcomes were reached, and that is maintaining the confidentiality of the process so that people still have faith that whatever they are negotiating in that round table, whatever we are doing in that mediation space and how they then come to an agreement—all of that backend leading to a signed agreement. That signed agreement should then be read into the record, however we do it, so that it is publicly available in court. I would not discount the outcome being read into the record and being publicly available, but anything leading up to how they formulated it should be confidential, and that is negotiations between the parties, because there is toing and froing, you are probably discussing the strengths and weaknesses in cases with DPP or police—all of those types of tactical things going on.

Mr KRAUSE: I understand that. I think it was you who said before, or it may have been one of the other witnesses, that the victims are not a party to criminal proceedings; it is the state.

Ms Schwartz: That is correct.

Mr KRAUSE: I am recognising the fact that the state and all of us have an interest in that justice system. We all have an interest, as well as the victim and the prosecutor, in what leads to a downgrade or a dismissal or a plea bargain. I thank you for answering that question, because I think it is an important point—that there is openness in that process, to a point.

Ms Schwartz: That is correct. I think that is what needs to be maintained here—that point—because there is a very fine line. Then I look at whether you are then wanting to extend this to children or just adults, because children's courts are traditionally closed courts. That is another kettle of fish.

Mr KRAUSE: That is a different question for a different day, quite possibly.

Ms Schwartz: That is correct.

Mr KRAUSE: I also wanted to ask about the proposed victims commissioner and your suggestion that the proposed victims commissioner be tasked with undertaking a review into the eligible category for victims, particularly into home invasions, which is part of our terms of reference for this inquiry. I make the point that, from my perspective, it assumes that a victims commissioner will be established, firstly.

Ms Schwartz: That is correct.

Mr KRAUSE: Secondly, I would think that any victims commissioner would have a slight conflict of interest in that process because they should want to expand the category of victims covered by the Victims of Crime Assistance Act because of their advocacy for victims. I am concerned that if that recommendation, as you put it to the committee, is taken up it just kicks the can down the road for dealing with that question about home invasions and that type of activity. Outside of your written submission, can you give us your view about that type of conduct and whether it should come under the Victims of Crime Assistance Act as it stands right now?

Ms Schwartz: If you are asking me specifically on home invasions and my view on it, if that is what you want to advocate and legislate to now fall within the definition within the act, you certainly have the power to go down that path and include it. I think we have said in my submissions that we would support the expansion of the definition to include home invasions.

Mr KRAUSE: You are open to considering it?

Ms Schwartz: We were open to considering it with more information. As I read how this committee came into being, this was introduced, I believe, on 16 March without notice and there was no additional material put out for people to then make submissions. We have just made our submission based on material that we have at hand. It would be foolhardy, with respect, to speak to things where I have not actually seen what the proposal is. I would like to see what it is that you would like in order to protect victims of home invasions. I certainly agree that there has been a plethora of crimes involving victims in their home. All you need to do is turn on the TV or pick up a newspaper. I see that with some of my victim-survivors of domestic and family violence who are attacked within their own homes, but what happens with them is that offending is subsumed by either a breach or a contravention of a domestic and family violence order. It is not a standalone offence for those victim-survivors. Certainly I think we could have a look at it with further detail.

Mr KRAUSE: Ms Schwartz, thank you. I apologise for putting you on the spot.

Ms Schwartz: That is fine.

Mr KRAUSE: It was just something that popped into my mind when I read your submission.

Ms Schwartz: Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Thelma. Thank you for your written submission and for being here today to give evidence. That brings to a conclusion this part of the hearing. We will now take a short break.

Proceedings suspended from 2.23 pm to 2.40 pm.

ILOSTE, Ms Rosemary, Private capacity

CHAIR: Rosemary, I have noticed that you have been here for most of the morning. Do you want to make an opening statement, which you are quite entitled to do, and then the committee will ask some questions?

Ms Iloste: Thank you for allowing me to be here. Like the other ladies, I did not know this was happening until I saw it on the news last night, which I am really disappointed about.

My story is that I had my home broken into and I was robbed four times within three years, between 2016 and 2019. It was the same person whom I had never met. I did not know him. I do not think I had ever seen him before. I did not see him then. He just broke in the first time—it was pot luck, I guess—and he got quite a bit of money, so he decided I was his ATM and he would keep coming back to me.

I had never been through anything like that before. It was very traumatic. Each time he completely up-ended my house. He got into my filing cabinet. He tore apart envelopes obviously looking for money. He got into my underwear drawer and pulled all my underwear out. He pulled every bit of clothing out of my wardrobe—everything. The whole place was unbelievable. That is very traumatising.

Between the first time and the fourth time, I spent over \$7,000 trying to safeguard my house. I had the police come around twice to do an assessment of my house and both times they said the only thing they could say was to get a dog, but I did not want a dog because I had retired and I wanted to travel and a dog would be a bit of an issue. Therefore, I got broken into a fourth time. After the third time, my youngest son put cameras in the house for me. That was of benefit the fourth time because the perpetrator looked up at the camera and we got a beautiful photo of him, so there was no argument about who it was.

I do not believe that victims get very much support at all—at least I did not. I gather that the main reason I did not get support was that I was not physically hurt. In this day and age of mental health issues, I cannot believe that that can be an answer. I was traumatised. I was so traumatised that I had to sell that house because I could not stay there. That was my home of 38 years. I had to sell that house to move on.

I did not realise how much it had affected me until I was in my new home for about four months. I was driving home one night and I thought, 'This is strange. I'm not churned up in the stomach going home.' I realised that for four years I had not slept. I had hardly slept at night. I did not want to go out because if I went out I would have to come home and what was I going to find? Each of my robberies was in the middle of the day, in the afternoon. The police say he was not stalking me; I say he was. My parents were in a nursing home and I would go over there of an afternoon and when I came back I had been robbed. To me, it was a matter of stalking.

He got quite a lot of my possessions—jewellery that had been passed down from my grandparents to me. Things that were very important to me were stolen. The fourth robbery was very traumatic because my parents had not long passed. Both of my parents were ex-service people. When I went into my bedroom and saw the mess, in the mess were my parents' military medals just thrown on the floor. I just wanted to screw his neck. I was so angry at his lack of respect.

I want to talk about what a victim needs. First of all, I think you need information. Particularly after the fourth robbery, I could not fault the police in Cairns. They almost put their arms around me and looked after me. There were things that I do not know whether they did not know or got missed, but there was no information about who to go to. Fortunately, I had worked in the government field for quite a long time, so I knew where to go. It did not do me any good, because I just got shoved from one post to another: 'We can't help you. This one can'; 'We can't help you. That one can.' They were no help at all.

I did not get told what would happen. There was a lovely female police lady who was one of the first on the scene—she had been there before. When she was leaving that day, she said, 'I will get him, Rosemary. I promise you I will get him.' Three weeks later she rang me all excited because she had got him and she was actually writing out the charge there and then. She was really lovely and helpful, but there was information that I did not get. For example, no-one told me when the court case was on. I knew that I could write a victim of crime impact statement—no-one actually had told me that—and I did, but I do not know if it was read out in court. I was not there because I was not told the court date. I would like to have read it out myself but I was not given that opportunity.

As far as assistance is concerned, the courthouse itself leaves a lot to be desired. There is no-one there to tell you where to go, what to say, what to do. I had been a JP for 50 years, so I have some idea. I have been in a court as a juror but I have never been in a court to give evidence before,

and it is a completely different feeling. I was very worked up about it, and there was no-one there, except at the last minute a beautiful police inspector who had been supporting me came in and sat next to me and told me what to do and how to do it. He was not doing that as part of his police duty; he was doing that as a private person, which was really lovely.

I have never seen a police liaison officer. In four robberies, no-one has ever been a police liaison officer support for me. Support for victims of crime is just a joke as far as I am concerned. It is more than a joke because I felt discriminated by them. Eventually, when I did get to speak to a person over the phone, he asked me my date of birth. I gave it to him and then he said, 'Oh, okay. Well, would you like to come in? I will probably have to help you fill out the forms?' I felt that was a bit of a put-down because I probably had a higher position in the government than he had. Then he went on to say, 'Are you all right to get in or do you need somebody to drive you in?' I can drive myself, thank you very much. The way he treated me because I was an older lady was not right. It was very disrespectful.

After going through and filling out all the forms—which are not easy to fill out, I must admit—he told me, no, I would not be eligible because I was not physically hurt. He did not give me any other leads as to where else I might go. Anyway, so that was that. Then the court process happened, and I did not get involved with that because I did not know.

CHAIR: Rosemary, I am conscious of time.

Ms Iloste: There is something else I want to say. After the court case happened and the perpetrator got sent to jail—he got a very lenient sentence—I was very disturbed that he could get out in no time and I would be a victim again. I tried to think of how I could stop that. The only thing I could think of was a domestic violence order, which I knew was not appropriate, but that was the only thing I could find that was available. Anyway, this lovely inspector rang me one day and asked, 'Is there anything you need? I said yes and told him what I was trying to do. He said, 'You need a peace and good behaviour form.'

I filled out that form and I took it to the courthouse to have it processed. That was one of the worst experiences. The ladies in the courthouse in Cairns were so rude to me. They just said they could not do it because I did not have the perpetrator's personal address. I said, 'I'm not allowed to have that.' They said, 'Well, we can't do it unless you have that.' Again, the inspector stepped in and helped me with that. I had to pay \$120 to get the peace and good behaviour order. I am the victim and I have to pay that to have some peace of mind that he has to stay away from me. Normally I would not have bothered with it, except I knew that the police around my area would look after me. I do not think most of the time those orders are worth the money.

CHAIR: Rosemary, unless you have something else pressing, I want to hand over to Laura, who may have a question for you.

Ms Iloste: The only other thing I want to say is that I was a victim of a perpetrator but then I was a victim of the system.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you for speaking today. I have a couple of questions for you. Firstly, you did not know about this until you saw it on the news last night?

Ms Iloste: No. That annoys me, because I had written many letters to the minister, the Premier, my state member. They know that I was a victim but they obviously would know about this and never let me know.

Mrs GERBER: It is also because, in my view, this process has been very rushed. Do you think there are others like you who have missed out?

Ms Iloste: Oh, yes—many, many, many.

Mrs GERBER: If this committee were able to come back to Cairns perhaps in a couple of weeks, would there be more people we could talk to?

Ms Iloste: Yes.

CHAIR: Can we stay on point, please?

Mrs GERBER: I think the time for the inquiry is on point. I take your point and I will move on.

CHAIR: You have made that perfectly clear. Could you ask questions of Rosemary because she has had some vital input into the hearing?

Mrs GERBER: I also wanted to give you the opportunity to talk a bit more about the support that is needed for victims of crime. One of the remits of this inquiry is to specifically look at victims of crime such as yourself who have been victims of property crime. You have given us some detail around how you felt there was a lack of support. If there was a body or an organisation that was centred around the

victim as opposed to the criminal justice system or the state prosecuting that crime and it was a one-stop shop, what are your views on that in terms of that organisation being able to tell you that you can do a victim impact statement and help you do that, be there with you during the court process or alternatively help you with the forms that need to be applied for in a trauma informed way?

Ms Iloste: Very definitely. I think the first step is that the police have a form that they can give to people. When they come to your house and you have been robbed, if they can give you a leaflet that says who you can get help from and who to contact, that would be a great starting point. If there is an organisation that just looks after the victims, I think that would be really good. In letters I have received back from ministers, they list all the different programs for the perpetrators. I do not give a stuff about them. I want something for me!

Mrs GERBER: There is nothing for the victims.

Ms Iloste: There is nothing.

Ms BOLTON: We have heard often about a one-stop shop to assist victims. You have described a lot of the failings. What are your thoughts on restorative practices or justice? Do you believe it would have helped you in the situation to be able to sit down with the perpetrator, if you were both in agreeance, so they could hear directly from you about how you were impacted?

Ms Iloste: No. I was offered that. I was offered to write him a letter to say how I felt and what had happened to me. I said, 'I'm not telling him that. That gives him ammunition to come back again. He knows how to get to me then and knows exactly what to do. I'm not going to do that.' I said, 'I'd rather face him in court.' They said, 'Do you want to do that?' I said no. They said, 'Why not?' I said, 'If it had been his first or second misdemeanour, I think I could do that,' but he was a well-known criminal who had a really long record. Even though he was only 15 the first time he robbed me, he had had a very lengthy record. I do not think that me talking to him would have done any good because he was on ice anyway. When he broke into my house, he was on ice.

CHAIR: That brings this part of the hearing to a conclusion.

Mr KRAUSE: Chair, I have a question.

CHAIR: No.

Mr KRAUSE: Why not?

CHAIR: I ask Valerie to come forward please.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you very much, Rosemary.

MANDALL, Ms Valerie, Private capacity

McLEOD, Mr Aaron, President, Crime and Justice Action Group

CHAIR: Welcome, Valerie. I invite you to make an opening statement. I know it is hard to gauge time but could you possibly keep it to five minutes so there is time for questions to be asked by the committee.

Ms Mandall: I am a 68-year-old granny. I have been down the usual path—single mum, retired, instrumental in raising my grandchildren. I have got a vet, an occupational therapist and a nurse, all finishing uni and going through uni. I have been with the housing department since 2008. I have not had any problems with them until three years ago in 2020.

I downsized my place because the kids were not with me anymore, and I moved to a duplex but it is detached. They moved this lady in from Maryborough. I dedicate my life to rescue dogs. I even helped this girl because she had nothing in that unit—a fridge, a bed and a washing machine. I even helped this girl get a dog because she gave me this big long DV story. Through the rescue I found out that it was actually her who perpetrated all the DV. She actually stabbed her husband. She lost custody of her daughter, and her son was in jail for rape and violence where he bashed the girl afterwards.

I kind of started to draw away from her. I have been bashed up three times in three years. I have been to the police. The first time was 2020. At that stage, I had pulled back from her. The police sergeant who came out was very nice. Donna had pushed a wheelie bin at me because she insists on parking her wheelie bins at my door and they smell. For most of the time, I just let her do it and did not argue with her until finally I had a rat come into my house and I saw it come from her bins outside my door.

When my grandson was home from uni, I decided I would clean it all up and sort the shared area out between our two units. She took great offence at that and that was when she pushed me with the wheelie bin and I snapped and I whopped her one back. I was so appalled at myself and my own behaviour that I would do that. My daughter came over straightaway. When the police arrived—Donna had called them as well—she told them that she had scratches and marks all over her body. Well, sorry, she is 30 years younger than me, she is taller and there was a wheelie bin between us. I have never spoken to that woman since where there has not been something between us.

Finally, getting to why I am here today, on 4 March this year she broke into my lounge room while I was sitting in my lounge chair and jumped on me, gouged my eyes out, smashed my new glasses, bang, and into my head. I still have damage in my eye. I have not seen a doctor with that because I cannot. I have got something wrong still with my cheek where she bashed me. She and her friend came in and did that. Do you want me to continue or shall I stop?

CHAIR: No. We have a couple more minutes and then we will go to questions.

Ms Mandall: Anyway, long story short—four times I have been to the police, I have been to housing, I have been to the Ombudsman, I have been to the two Labor ministers here. Nobody would help me except for CJAG.

CHAIR: Thank you, Valerie.

Mrs GERBER: Thank you, Valerie, for talking today. Can you talk us through the support—well, was any support offered to you as a victim of crime?

Ms Mandall: No.

Mrs GERBER: What about throughout the court process?

Ms Mandall: There has been no court process.

CHAIR: Valerie, I am sorry to interrupt. Can you just be careful about it. Do you know—and if you do not know Aaron might be able to help out—whether anybody has been arrested?

Ms Mandall: It is still under investigation.

CHAIR: So they have not been—

Mr McLeod: There has been no arrest and there have been no charges laid.

CHAIR: Can you be a bit careful talking about the actual incident because we have a rule in relation to sub judice. We do not want to prejudice any future proceedings. I know it is a bit difficult but Aaron is here and I am sure he understands.

Mr McLeod: Would it be okay if Val actually talks about the investigation in terms of what the police's behaviours are?

CHAIR: You can talk about the investigation—

Mr McLeod: And the authorities but do not mention the alleged offender?

Mrs GERBER: The sub judice rule really only applies once charges have been laid. The minute it is before the court, the sub judice rule in parliament comes in.

Mr McLeod: It is not before the court.

Mrs GERBER: So it is not before the court.

CHAIR: That is all I was trying to ascertain. I will not interrupt again.

Ms Mandall: To go back to 2020 when this police sergeant came out, she said to me and my daughter, 'In situations like this, the housing department will kick you both out if we get called back again.' Fine, I am not going to do anything, so I did not say anything to anyone for nearly 18 months.

I garden every year with my grandkids. To see my front yard now, it is a disgrace because I am not game to go out there. I left to go home and check my dogs. I live behind locked doors 24/7, yet nobody will say to Donna, 'You're wrong. You can't do that.' She's built a fence around the place and Lord knows what will happen if we have a cyclone—people will be killed. It is bad and nobody will say anything to her. The police are scared of her. She left her key on my lounge room chair—I am sorry, I cannot say that, can I?

Mr McLeod: At this stage, we have clarified that it is not before the court, Valerie.

CHAIR: There is no charge.

Mr McLeod: You now have open slather. You say what you want to say.

Ms Mandall: Her car key was on my lounge. I had not spoken to this woman since November last year when I laid another charge when she threw two handfuls of dirt right into my face. I have not spoken to her since. I tried to get charges laid then—no, nothing. I did not even hear from the police if they were going to charge her until five months later when we finally heard when I went in with Aaron: 'No. No evidence.' But I have got the evidence. I have got a tonne of messages that I have sent to my family at the times when she has thrown rocks and rotten fruit. There are all sorts of terrible things she does. I am terrified for my dogs. I have seen her beat her own dog up. I have seen her smash door handles off.

CHAIR: Valerie, we will go to questions.

Mr KRAUSE: Valerie, thanks for your testimony. How long has it been now since you were assaulted?

Ms Mandall: Which time?

Mr KRAUSE: There was an allegation about someone breaking into your lounge room?

Ms Mandall: That was in March.

Mr KRAUSE: So six weeks ago at least.

Ms Mandall: Yes, and Aaron went to the police station with me. We tried a couple of times I think to get some information. I had more to tell them about evidence that I could have contributed. I had spoken to my doctor and he said if he could see the photos he might be able to crank up the medical certificate but they lied to me at the desk: 'No. You can't speak to anybody but the young constable who took the complaint.'

Mr KRAUSE: Valerie, the fact that you suffered a really bad assault six weeks or two months ago and there have been no charges laid and you have not heard any information about it—don't take this in a trite manner—how does that make you feel about your rights as a citizen?

Ms Mandall: It makes me feel like I am a second-class citizen, and I am not. I might be poor, but I am not a second-class citizen. I do not have a record. I do not even have a driving offence. I live my life in misery. I went home to see if my dogs were all right, and that is my life. I have been to housing and they are telling me that the police are telling them that they are suspect about the key being in my lounge room. How else is it going to get there? 'You could have picked it up outside.' I do not go outside. I live in a room with my dogs and it is wrong and it needs to change.

Mr McLeod: Can I just clarify as well—and Valerie can confirm the information—that the evidence that was left on the scene is the key that Valerie speaks of but there was also a comb with substantial DNA material.

Mrs GERBER: All of that is probably outside the remit of the terms of reference for the inquiry. What I am really interested in with what Valerie was talking about is in relation to the lack of support and the lack of information that she has been provided with during the course of an investigation. Yes, there are no charges laid yet, but there is clearly an investigation happening or ongoing and the fact that you have not received any support, help or information is concerning. Thank you for sharing that with the committee. I think that is really valuable information because this committee is meant to be looking at what else could be done and that is certainly a missing piece of the puzzle.

CHAIR: Thank you, Valerie. I call Catherine Williams now.

WILLIAMS, Ms Catherine, Private capacity

CHAIR: Welcome, Catherine. You are welcome to make an opening statement. You have been here for most of the day.

Ms Williams: Yes, I have.

CHAIR: Keep it within five minutes so the committee can ask you some questions.

Ms Williams: I will try. My case is not like any of these because I have not been the victim as such. I am 75 years of age and I have two daughters and three grandsons. My grandsons now are 25, 23 and 21. In 2018 my middle grandson was going into Gilligan's hotel with his mates to have a beer legally at the pub because he had turned 18. He turned 18 in November, but he had had an operation on his leg and he did not get to go into town until December. He got a maxi taxi in with his friends. They had actually had a drink or two before they left. When one of them got out of the taxi, he went around behind Josh and kicked him in the back of his leg and rebroke his knee. He has had three operations since then. He is on PTSD medication and his life has been terrible. He has suffered greatly, as have all the family.

As if that was not bad enough, on 20 June 2020 Marcus, my eldest grandson, had two of his mobile phones playing Pokemon outside Coast Roast Cafe at the Esplanade when two Indigenous—and I have to say Indigenous, if you do not mind—youths came up to him. The 17-year-old one asked him for his mobile and Marcus said 'no' and just put his head down and continued playing his game. The 14-year-old one came up behind him, pushed him down to the ground and broke his nose.

I left a bit out, sorry. When he said 'no' to giving him the phone and he put his head down, the 17-year-old one got a pair of scissors out of his backpack and he stabbed Marcus in the eye and broke his eye socket. Then the 14-year-old one came around behind him and pushed him down on the ground and broke his nose. It was a Saturday night at 6 o'clock. There were people at the Esplanade who went over to him. The police were called and they rang my son-in-law and my son-in-law got him and they took him to Cairns Hospital. We did not know whether he was going to have brain damage or not. We did not know how far the scissors had gone into his eye.

They started treating him when the ambulance was backed up at the hospital. Then they took him and they did all the tests and everything. He did not leave the hospital until about 4 o'clock next morning. The police were very good. They worked really hard. They were out to get this Indigenous fellow because he had six charges. He would teach young children how to steal cars and bikes and lollies and cigarettes from the shop. When he stabbed Marcus the judge even said, 'This has taken the crime to a new level. You have actually harmed someone. You have done something to them, bodily harm.'

Anyway, they were so bad, these two guys, they changed their clothes. They got on the bus in Lake Street. They got out of the bus, apparently at Raintrees. The poor police. I might say [REDACTED] when I am talking. I do not mean the profanity. I do not say the f-word and the c-word. I only say [REDACTED] because of my age. The rotten [REDACTED] so-and-sos, they changed their clothes for crying out loud. They changed their clothes so that when the police started looking for them in the description of what the people at the lagoon had told them and, of course, they did not have those clothes on.

Anyway, top marks to the police: they tried and tried and tried. By the Wednesday night they got the eldest one. He was put in jail. They did not get the 14-year-old till quite a few weeks later because he had gone to ground or his relatives had helped him. I have not heard what happened to him as the court case—because he was a child—was postponed a couple of times.

The guy who did it, his name is Ben. He went to court on 16 December 2020. They read his statement out but they would not show the CCTV footage of the actual assault. I asked the lady afterwards and she said it was too scratchy. I do not care how [REDACTED] scratchy it was. They had that CCTV footage and that should have been put on the screen so that everyone in the court could watch it.

CHAIR: Catherine, I am conscious of time.

Ms Williams: I will go to the end. On the day of court, he had been in custody for six months, they let him out. There was an Indigenous lady sitting there prior to commencement and a man came out. I do not know what his role was. He said that the guy that was representing Ben was held up but he had been told the whole case and this guy was going to help them. He said, 'Don't worry, we have a female magistrate. Keep your fingers crossed and your brother will be able to leave today.' I had to sit there in that court and go through all of that knowing that the case had already been decided.

They said in his statement that he was willing to apologise to Marcus. The magistrate was saying her little spiel and then she was going to hand down the sentence. I could not stand it anymore. I put my hand up and I said, 'Please, he hasn't said apologies to Marcus.' They asked Ben if he would do it and he said, 'Yes.' He just stood up. I put my hand up again and I said, 'If he's going to apologise, tell him to turn around and face Marcus if he's going to apologise.' Anyway, he did. Then she handed down the sentence and all that. I still could not contain myself. There was a policewoman sitting next to Ben.

CHAIR: Catherine, I do not mean to pull you up but I understand your issue in having to go through that in the courtroom.

Ms Williams: It was horrible. I have no justice for victims of crime. I went and got a tattoo the next day. I went and got a tattoo of my grandchildren on my arm.

CHAIR: Catherine, I will just hand over to Laura so that she can ask you a question and then I will go to the other committee members.

Mr KRAUSE: Chair, I will ask a question on behalf of Laura. Catherine, I hear everything you say and I think I understand how it made you feel. You were on a bit of a run there about the police officer and Ben turning around and apologising. I wondered if you wanted to finish that statement.

CHAIR: I am sorry to interrupt your flow but the member for Caloundra has to leave us.

Mr KRAUSE: Sure.

Mr HUNT: Can I just take a moment to thank you all. I have been sitting here taking copious notes and listening, because part of the reason we are all here is to listen to everyone's submissions so that we can identify gaps, weaknesses, areas that require improvement. I have heard some extremely compelling arguments and some extremely gut-wrenching tales from the community up here. It has been extremely valuable and I thank you all for taking the time despite the pain. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Sorry, Jon; back to you.

Mr KRAUSE: You are right. Catherine, do you want to continue where you left off for as long as the chair will allow you?

Ms Williams: Just the bit about the court case. I was a justice of the peace for 26 years. I ran Neighbourhood Watch down in Sydney. I have a long-service bar from CWA. I have been an upstanding citizen all my life. I am sixth generation Australian. We have built this whole country the way that it is and we are supposed to be living in peace. Yesterday was Anzac Day. All I could think was there was not a [REDACTED] war and yet I have two grandsons, 23 and 25, and they are suffering. My daughter is suffering. My son-in-law is suffering. My husband cannot even talk about it. His brother was killed by a drunk driver in 1957 and when all this happened to Marcus it brought it all back. It is just unbelievable. My doctor told me not to listen to the news but I have to.

I was so grateful that Channel 7, like the other people have said, advertised that this thing was on today because, honestly and truly, you should have some kind of Neighbourhood Watch for victims of crime so that we can come, as bad as it is. I tell you, my stomach has been turned inside out and upside-down and around and around, but I had to stay. I had to stay and say it, because no-one knows. I go to the shop and I see people looking at me and they look me up and down. That is too much for me. I go over to them and say, 'It's not what it seems. I am a good person. I have done nothing wrong and yet my two grandsons are suffering.' One man at Muddy's said to me, 'You must've been really angry to put tattoos on.' I said, 'When the court justice system did not help my two grandsons, I have their names there because they are near my heart and I will do and say whatever I have to to get some justice for them.' Even the girl who did the tattoos wanted to know everything. Anyone who sees the tattoos they ask me and I tell them the story. This is the first opportunity I have had and I thank all of you for coming and listening to me.

CHAIR: Thank you, Catherine. Sandy, do you have a question?

Ms BOLTON: I have a quick one, thank you, Chair. Thank you so much, Catherine. With everything we have heard, and I know you would have heard from previous witnesses, to help people like your sons and your family what is one thing that this inquiry could deliver that could make a difference?

CHAIR: Catherine just said that they are her grandsons.

Ms BOLTON: Sorry, grandsons.

Ms Williams: Everyone thinks they are my sons but they are not; they are my grandsons. I do not know. I do not have all the answers. I watch TV of a night and I see all the crime. There has to be

the biggest shake-up. We do not need more money poured in for the police to drive around. We need the police to be able to do their job when they do all their work leading up to the court case. When it gets to the court case, there has to be justice there. There has to be more respect. Respect older people like the two other ladies. There is no respect in the community. The kids do not respect their family and all the stuff like that.

In this case with Ben, I did feel sorry for him. I broke another rule. That is what maybe you were thinking about. The police officer was sitting there and I thought, 'This hasn't been handled properly at all.' So I went over to speak to the perpetrator. His legal person came over and said, 'What are you going to do? What is happening?' I said, 'I want to talk to Ben.' He said, 'Only if you're going to be nice.' I said, 'I'm a nice person. I am just going to speak to him.'

I went over to him and I said, 'You have done a wicked thing. You have ruined Marcus's life. You have ruined our lives—our whole family. Until the day I die I will never forgive you for what you have done.' I said, 'I am sorry that your parents were not there. I am sorry that your aunty was not there for you. But, I am telling you now, if you do not behave on that bond for the 12 months'—he had to go to Innisfail police station three times a week. I said, 'If you do not do the right thing now, mate, you know you are going to be mincemeat when you go to jail if you do something again and you go in again.' I could not help myself. I had to do that. I did that with the risk that I was going to be in contempt of court and I could not help it because that is how strongly I felt about it.

Mrs GERBER: Catherine, can I just ask you one quick question: are you saying you only heard about this via the Channel 7 news?

Ms Williams: Yes.

Mrs GERBER: In relation to that time frame—

CHAIR: Before you go on, can I just correct the issue in relation to what we did to try to publicise this. We sent information out to all the regional media about our forthcoming hearing here.

Mrs GERBER: When did you do that, Peter?

Ms Williams: Really?

CHAIR: Yes, we did.

Ms Williams: Something is not working. I do not know what the answer is. I wish I did.

CHAIR: I do not know what the answer is, but I want to put on the record that we did everything in our power to make sure that everyone in the regions knew about these hearings.

Ms Williams: That is very good and I am pleased—

Mrs GERBER: I think the point that needs to be made with that is that we are under such a constrained time frame. There is only six weeks for this inquiry. The notice that went out meant that our hearing is four or five days, the next day. People do not have time to come in. People do not have time to make a statement. You do not have time to tell your friends. You do not have time to get the support you need. The point I am trying to make there is that you saw it on the news and you came in. Do you think there are others who may have liked to have presented to our committee—

Ms Williams: Of course there would be.

Mrs GERBER:—and have not had the opportunity?

Ms Williams: Everyone who has had their car stolen and their house—

CHAIR: Can we just get back to the hearing because we are under time restraints this afternoon. I have another committee member who needs to leave in five minutes. Catherine, thank you for coming.

Ms Williams: I am sorry I got upset but I did not cry.

CHAIR: No, that is not an issue. I ask Robert Donald to come forward.

DONALD, Mr Robert, private capacity

Mr Donald: Mr Chairman and Madam Deputy, the testimonies that you have heard are all indicative of where we are. Cairns is in fear. That is not an understatement. Cairns is in fear. These good people all have fearful things. We all do one way or another because we are human and this is where the problem lies. If I were to ask you, Mr Chairman, to define a 'victim' then we would be here until next week. We are all victims in one way or another.

At the moment this city is in dire circumstances. It needs to go back to parliament in an endorsed manner so that parliament understands that we are not some sort of FNQ up there—the north that does not really matter. We are part of this state and people, as you have heard here, are living in fear. They will not leave their homes. People are confined to their homes. It is terrible. As Sir David Attenborough said, the world is a wonderful place except for humans. That is probably a very accurate statement.

People have come here today to express their concerns or, as I said, their fears of living here in this city. That needs to be transported to parliament in a manner that will be understood fully because we cannot go on like this. We simply cannot. I know you are all from different delegate areas. However, I suspect that the same thing applies irrespective of your area where you look after things. It is very important that we stick together or amalgamate in a manner so that parliament understands very clearly our dilemma here.

My son is a police officer. I am not very happy about that. I fear for him. I fear for his partner. I am old, it does not matter for me, but I do have concerns for the others, particularly the youth. We need to start at the schools. If we have not corrected things by the time a child reaches double digits, we are too late. Please take that on board. Thank you.

CHAIR: Robert, do you want to answer some questions from the committee or are you happy with your statement?

Mr Donald: I am happy to answer any questions.

Mrs GERBER: As part of this inquiry we are looking at both the court processes around victims of crime, as well as the peripheral supports that victims of crime might need, including financial support. Did you have anything you wanted the committee to understand from your perspective, or even your son's perspective, in relation to those two areas? Is there anything you would like to see happen in those areas?

Mr Donald: What I would like to see is if we could have a human GPS system, instead of just a road map, because that is what we need. The lady earlier—Leesa, I think her name was—was in a terrible situation there. Obviously nobody has said to her, 'Look, all you do is go into the court or police station or whatever and take out a DVO against this perpetrator,' who was threatening her son. There are avenues that we can go down. Our learned friend over here, the lawyer, he knows quite a lot about law, but clearly some of the areas that he was looking for information on are not apparent.

Mrs GERBER: Some of the other witnesses have suggested that we do need an organisation that is targeted towards supporting victims, that it needs to be independently resourced and funded.

Mr Donald: Absolutely. Otherwise why are people staying at home?

Mrs GERBER: Thank you very much, Robert.

CHAIR: Sandy, I am conscious of your time limitations.

Ms BOLTON: Chair, he covered everything we needed to know in terms of what is going on in Cairns.

CHAIR: Sandy, I understand you have to go. Thank you for your participation today. Thank you, Robert.

ROSS, Mr Craig, Private capacity

CHAIR: Craig, you have been here all day. I invite you to make a five-minute opening statement.

Mr Ross: Are you going to give me the five minutes or are you going to cut me off?

CHAIR: No, I will probably give you even more.

Mr Ross: Promise? I would like to open with saying that there is a crime epidemic in Cairns. If you go to Cairns courthouse on Monday, there are two sessions, one at 9.30 and another at 1.30 or 2. For every single person that goes through that court there is effectively a victim at the end of that process.

I am concerned firstly that people have had to leave this meeting early; they have not even given us the hours that they said we would have. It seems to have been rushed. You are saying that you have made all efforts to let everyone else know. I think this committee needs to know from all the people, some of whom have horrendous stories. My story is not that bad; it is more of a property crime. There are horrendous stories that people have reported and we have found out on Channel 7 local news. What if Channel 7 local news did not say it? We would not have anyone. Would that make it better or worse? Funnily enough, not even the local member turned up. He did not even hear about it. Has the correspondence even gone through to him? And he cares—I hear it all the time!

An audience member interjected.

Mr Ross: That is probably right. I do not know.

An audience member interjected.

Mr Ross: The issue that I have had—we have had about 15 break and enters—

Mrs GERBER: Sorry, 15 break and enters?

Mr Ross: Yes, 15 at our hotel. We have a local hotel. I will wait for the chair to listen. I am not getting paid for this, with respect. Are we right? No. Ignored. So, that many. It is worse than that because it is like a revolving door with tourism. We are an inner-city hotel. I have seen dramatic changes in this local area in tourism. We have, say, 100, 120 guests staying with us most nights, and they are traumatised. We are talking about tourists. That is the reason that the people who live in Cairns are not saying we have this massive problem because that will affect tourism in a big, big way. Townsville is a little bit of a different story as they do not rely on tourism as much, but this is a big problem. To see and to talk to the people who come in and go out of our property and to see how badly they speak of Cairns because of the abuse they get and the violence they get—where is it going to be in another 12 months? I suspect that you guys are on different sides of the political—

Mrs GERBER: How could you tell?

Mr Ross: Really? I suspect that because you keep arguing against each other. We do not care about that, to tell you the truth. You have flown in from Brisbane or wherever you have flown in from. This is our community. I think the community should fix it. I think our community should fix it, but we should get the support. I am so over it. When the elections come up, every time there is an election, you come out and politicians—with respect, I love politicians, we need them; we need you all—start giving us our money back to keep your jobs. You say, 'This is what we are going to do for you.' We want it done now. We are not going to wait until the election. Why do we have to wait until the election? How long is this process going to take? Are you serious about it? I know you have all been through this experience, but for three hours you give this community that is bleeding, this is what you do? Then you get on your plane. He has to go. He did not ask a question because he had to go early. I don't know; he had to get home to kids. But these people are living through this pain every day. They go back to this pain. They do not jump on a plane and go back to Brisbane and everything is fine. If you wouldn't mind, I have purposely cut my time short because the chairman said he would give me six minutes.

Mrs GERBER: I understand.

Mr Ross: Please ask me some questions because you may be heading down the right track. The chair might ask me a question. I would love to hear from him. He's a Townsville man.

Mrs GERBER: Mr Ross, thank you for coming. To clarify, I want to firstly put on the record that my reflections around the time line for this inquiry is in no way a reflection on our committee secretariat. They are doing everything they can to be able to make sure that they are complying with the time line that the government has set for this inquiry. The fact that they have had to put notices out and there is not enough time for the community to respond is not a reflection on our secretariat; it is absolutely a reflection on the government and the time they have given for this inquiry because it is too short. I wanted to make that clear just in case anyone thought that it was something other than that. I want to

hear from you in relation to how victims of crime can be better supported. The purpose of this inquiry is to try to come up with some recommendations around what needs to be done to make sure that victims of crime are supported. At the moment what I am hearing is that the scale is tipped in the balance of perpetrators.

Mr Ross: With regard to our hotel, we have spent something like \$50,000 on fortifying the property. That is what we have to do—roller doors, big gates, new locks, stronger doors—just to stop it from happening, to keep our people safe. I am an employer. I have employed more than 18,000 people in my life. I do not want to do it anymore. It is just too hard. There is no support. The last four times we have called the police, no-one has even turned up. That is generally what has happened.

I will tell you a story. There is a police station out at the lagoon. Out of desperation I went down there one day and I said, 'I just need help. I need help. It can't keep going on.' One good police guy said, 'Look, this is the number. Call this number and we will come out.' Some things had been resolved, but the last time we called, they said, 'You cannot call this number, you have to call the 1300 number and put it online.' Nothing happens! They are kicking the doors down, making the guests freak out about their safety, but no-one comes. No-one comes. Just to be really clear, no-one comes. No-one comes. What do the police say? The police say, 'There is no point, mate. We put it through the courts. It is just a revolving door. Around and around it goes. They want us to do all this paperwork. It gets to the court, they get a slap on the wrist and they are out and they do the same thing over again.' The police have given up. There is no use. All this rubbish about bringing more police in and bringing more police in—to do what? To do more of not turning up again? I do not understand it. They just do not do the work.

Look, whether you are on one side or the other, you guys have had a long time to sort this out. It is 15. We have record car thefts, record break and enters, record everything, and record assaults. What's going on? 'Not my fault. No, nothing to do with us.' No, I think you have had enough time. I think you should really do something about it. If anything comes out of this committee, you need to help us. You need to help us, not leave because you have to go back to Brisbane in an hour, and just breeze in and breeze out and not give us any time. I asked and I was shot down. I was shot down. I said, 'Why can't we have another term like this, another committee meeting and get—

Mrs GERBER: When did you—

Mr Ross: I said that before. He just said, 'Don't interrupt. Don't do this, don't do that,' as if I am the bad guy. I am an engineer. It is a problem. We deal with problems and solutions. What is the problem? Nut it all out and this is the solution. We work through it, down a path, a critical path, and we come to the results. That is where we go.

Mrs GERBER: I would love some more time. I would really prefer—

Mr Ross: I think the community deserves more time!

Mrs GERBER: They do.

Mr Ross: They have been bashed. They have been bashed in their own homes. You give us three hours!

CHAIR: Craig, you have made your point.

Mr Ross: I thought I would be cut off.

CHAIR: Jonty, do you have a question?

Ms BUSH: Craig, thank you so much for coming along. I know you have been here all day listening to everything.

Mr Ross: I do not get paid for this either.

Ms BUSH: I appreciate that.

Mr Ross: None of us do.

Ms BUSH: You would have also heard me make the comment as well that often—in the time I have been appointed in this role, there has been a number of different inquiries on a range of criminal justice issues. This one is dedicated to victims' issues. Outside of issues around offenders, which I hear is very important to you, of course—they are also very important to me—we are talking about how do we bolster responses to victims. I am interested in your specific views on that.

Mr Ross: If you have no police force when the crime is happening to people, how do you resolve that?

Ms BUSH: Any views on restorative justice passages?

Mr Ross: That is your area. Get the police minister here. Get the local member. I do not know where he is, but he may be able to help.

Ms BUSH: Any views on restorative justice practices?

Mr Ross: I do not know what restorative is. Seriously. What do you mean by that?

Ms BUSH: That is okay. If you do not have any views on that, that is okay.

Mr Ross: No, I am asking you what do you mean.

Ms BUSH: Any views on the victims commissioner recommendations that we have talked about today and how that could be shaped to help victims any better?

An audience member interjected.

CHAIR: Excuse me. Craig has got the floor.

An audience member interjected.

CHAIR: Can you leave, please? Could you just leave?

An audience member interjected.

Ms Williams: He is the only one that thinks that. We don't. He is the only one that thinks that.

CHAIR: That is alright.

Ms Williams: That is a horrible thing to say. Sorry.

CHAIR: No, it is okay.

Mr Ross: I sincerely appreciate you guys being here because someone has to do something. It is a big responsibility because you are the only ones who are listening. Our local member is not. I know he is a mate of yours, but he is not listening.

Ms BUSH: I want to make sure we are getting the most out of you that we can in the time we have to produce a report that has some recommendations that can help not just victims in Cairns but victims right across Queensland. Do you have anything to say about the Charter of Victims' Rights? I just want to make sure there is nothing we are missing from you on specific issues around the victims inquiry.

Mr Ross: I will go back to the police. The police cannot be hamstrung. They have to serve the people, not just ignore them. They know that at the moment it is a pointless exercise. We will have no tourism industry in this community, if this continues for another year.

Ms BUSH: Can I ask a question of you?

Mr Ross: You have the floor.

Ms BUSH: Police have not responded. Is that something you have taken higher? Have you raised that? Have you made a formal complaint? What have you done? I am just trying to understand.

Mr Ross: I will tell you a story. One night at two in the morning we heard the kicking of a door in. It was a fire door. Fire doors need to be opened from the inside, so you cannot lock them. You cannot close them. They were kicking this glass door in. I got dressed and went down there. I am concerned. We live on site. I am concerned about the people who are staying on our property.

I went down there and I saw the guy. I said, 'What are you doing, mate?' They took off up the street. I followed them. I had another colleague with me. We followed them. We called the police—no police, no police, no police. That person stayed with them and followed them. The other one went to the police station. They were not interested. There is so much crime in this community the police have given up. You have to support the police.

On another point, people have been badly injured and a lot of it is from stealing things. They will do anything to steal. They will stab you in the back. They are terrible crimes. They should be separate: Violent crime and restoration for those people and property crime that we have to deal with. They should be separate. It is very confusing when you are going from this one to that one. I think there are different roads to sorting out the issue.

Mr KRAUSE: Thank you for your submission. We appreciate it. I just want to go back to when you had that incident at your establishment where the police came and put their hands up and said, 'We can't bother anymore because they just go to court and get let out.' Was that in relation to young offenders or older offenders?

Mr Ross: There was one particular one involved with that. There have been a lot of them. It is not something that we are going to put up in lights. This is the last thing I want to do because we have

to run a business. I do not get income from the state. It comes from across the counter. We have to work for it.

An Indigenous lady was walking up the street and she came into the bar. She was clearly intoxicated. 'Give us a drink.' 'No, you can't have a drink.' She leant over the bar and started throwing glasses around the place—20 glasses. This is in a family steakhouse. We sat her down and tried to sort her out, but she was very drunk. That is what they said. They said, 'There is no point. It is a just a revolving door. We will put her in.' I think they would give her a \$500 fine. She does not pay it and nothing happens.

This is where we are at. I think Townsville has a record of number of cars stolen, but Cairns is right up there. We have a real crime problem.

Mr KRAUSE: Your place is family—what did you say your establishment is called?

Mr Ross: I would rather not say because I do not want any bad press. It is just up the road here. It is right in the city—Lake Central Cairns. What I would like more than anything is for you to take this seriously because it is a lot worse than you may understand. One thing I was saying earlier is that you should go to Cairns courthouse. You said you know Cairns very well. Go to Cairns courthouse at 9.30 and see how big a problem this really is in this community.

Ms Mandall: Can I just say one more thing? I go to the markets on Fridays and I check my mail. I have to look over at that courthouse every Friday and it all comes back to me again—my two grandsons.

CHAIR: Thank you, Craig.

TAYLOR, Mr Rod, Private capacity

CHAIR: I welcome Rod Taylor.

Mr Taylor: Good afternoon. Twenty-two years ago I was a volunteer in policing here in Cairns. I came up with an idea then to do a community liaison officer for mature age people. I did all the paperwork. I handed it to the then commissioner of police, Bob Atkinson, who handed it on to the then minister for police—I cannot remember his name. He very conveniently threw it in the rubbish bin. 'It's too hard. It's impossible. We're not interested in doing it. We are never going to need to have mature age police liaison officers around.' I ask these people here: are they of mature age? Yes. I still have the paperwork at home if you want to have a look at it.

A few years ago I was at the shopping centre with my dog. The next thing is I see a hand come down beside me—she is a registered assistance dog—and she tried to grab my little pup. I moved out of the way. The next thing is I hear a disturbance behind me. This gentleman decided to assault this little girl who was about six at the time. The mother wanted to beat the crap out of him. The next thing is he walks past me and he punches me in the middle of the back. I said a few polite words to him. There were two witnesses plus the staff member who saw it happen. It was caught on video.

When I went to the police, the police went, 'Yeah, hmm. There's not much we can do about it.' Why? 'Because it does not actually show him assaulting you. It shows him walking past you. The camera was behind him.' I was not allowed to see the video. When it got to court he got a slap on the wrist and a kick up the rear end and told not to do it again. Obviously it was not his first time. It was the first time being caught but he got let off. I now suffer with PTSD. I cannot go out. I get petrified if I go near that particular shopping centre to the point that I sometimes sit there and cry. I am 72 years of age. I do not feel very good. I am a victim of this garbage that is going on.

I was a housing manager for an Indigenous community. I had 15 death threats in 5½ years from a shotgun to a piece of wood. Do you know what the coppers told me? It was all in my head. We have a crime wave going on that no-one wants to do anything about. Here we are trying to say to you, 'This is what needs to be done. How about doing something? How about asking us what we want done?'

As for the story on Channel 7 last night, I saw it on the four o'clock news last night. I rang this hotel to find out what time this hearing was on. They knew nothing about it.

CHAIR: They should have known because we were coming and they put the sign on the door.

Mr Taylor: Exactly. I rang Channel 7 and could not get a response from them. It was only on the John Mackenzie show this morning, a local talkback show here in Cairns, that I heard the conversation—you beauty—and then I got the information that it was a closed workshop up until two o'clock. That is why I turned up late because I thought it was a closed workshop but obviously it was not a closed workshop. There are a lot of things I could sit here and talk to you about. Are you interested in talking? I do not know.

Mrs GERBER: I am. If you have finished your opening statement, I am happy to ask questions. Rod, because of the time frames, in your view are there more people who would have liked to be here to talk?

Mr Taylor: Of course there is.

Ms Mandall: This room wouldn't have been big enough. You'd need the whole floor!

CHAIR: Valerie—

Mr Taylor: Exactly what this lady is saying.

CHAIR: Everyone just stop. Rod has the floor. Questions will be directed to Rod and then he will answer the best he can. If we keep on getting commentary from the floor, we will blow this out unnecessarily.

Mr Ross: It is important to us.

CHAIR: Yes, I know but you have to respect the fact that Rod is talking to the committee.

Mrs GERBER: There is a process.

CHAIR: That is what I am asking you is to give Rod his time, please.

Mrs GERBER: Rod, I would like to delve deeper into your comment around mature age police liaison officers. What did you mean by that? Can you describe to us how that might look?

Mr Taylor: Basically what happens is there are a lot of mature age people around who suffer as victims of crime at home. We used to go out and do a lot of research on people's homes and advise them on what was going on. We knew everything about it. I used to be a security officer. That is why I was given that job. We tell them out how to install security screens, where to go and all the rest of it. As soon as I stopped being a volunteer, it just died.

I do not know what the minister did. I personally handed the documents to Bob Atkinson at a funeral of one of the police officers. Bob said, 'I'll take it back and have a read of it,' and he said, 'I'll pass it on to the minister.' He threw it in the bin. That is the response from the government.

You are here saying what you want to say and what you think we want to hear. What we want to see and what we want to hear is 'Yes, we are going to do something.' Enough of saying, 'We haven't got enough police.' There are two pieces of Queensland legislation and I do not know whether you are aware of it. There is a piece of legislation called 'special constables'. There is also a piece of legislation called 'volunteers in policing'.

Mrs GERBER: Yes, that was passed in the last sitting week.

Mr Taylor: That was passed years ago. That was passed over 20-odd years ago.

Mrs GERBER: There was an amendment. Yes, I understand what you are saying.

Mr Taylor: That is all in legislation. Why don't you go and get people who want to be police officers who do not have to go through all the rubbish of having to say supercalifragilisticexpialidocious in 15 different languages backwards and upside down? If you want to be a police officer, you can smell a crime, see a crime and go out and do it. Imagine what would happen if we had 4,000 police officers here in Cairns?

Mrs GERBER: There is a shortage.

Mr Taylor: Statewide.

Mrs GERBER: Yes, I know.

Mr Taylor: The crime rate would go down because there would be a copper on every corner. Have you ever been to New York?

Mrs GERBER: No, I have not.

Mr Taylor: Go to New York and see how many coppers are standing on the street corner there.

Mrs GERBER: No. I don't really want to go to New York.

Mr Taylor: There are thousands of them—literally thousands of them. I was there in 2001 prior to the twin towers. I felt safer walking around New York City than I do walking down Lake Street, down near Munro Martin Parklands in my own city, because there were so many coppers. It did not matter where you looked—there were coppers. I think there were more coppers than people. On every corner you stood on was the entire population of Cairns standing there and looking at you—140,000 people. You felt safe. It did not matter where you went. Here, there are no police officers. That is in 20-odd years. It has just got worse and worse.

The other thing is you are talking about a judicial system. Thanks to 'Go-Anna Lie'—Anna Bligh—you cannot sack them.

Mrs GERBER: I was going to ask you what you meant.

Mr Taylor: You cannot sack them. They have a contract saying, 'We can't be sacked because we're such nice people.' When Campbell Newman came in, he wanted to get rid of them. All of a sudden they jumped up and down. They did not like the new minister so they all went on strike. He wanted to get rid of them and bring in new judges. You are Liberal, I take it.

Mrs GERBER: Liberal National Party.

Mr Taylor: When you get in next year—and, believe me, you have a pretty good chance of getting in as long as you do the right thing—say to the judicial systems, 'That might have been them; this is us. This is the contract you are signing with us.'

Mrs GERBER: There needs to be consequences for action—100 per cent.

Mr Taylor: We give you a set of rules and regulations. When you stop and think about it, we—these people sitting here—are your employers. We employ you to do a job. You employ the judges to do a job. We tell you what we want done. You tell the judges what the people want done. If they cannot do it, there is the door—take a hike.

Mrs GERBER: There is the separation of powers—

Mr Taylor: I realise that.

Mrs GERBER:—and I am keen to respect that considering the shadow assistant portfolio that I have.

CHAIR: Thanks, Rod.

Mrs GERBER: Rod, I think the testimony you gave about special constables and senior police liaison officers was very useful.

Mr Taylor: It is something that needs to be brought in.

Mrs GERBER: It was an aspect that we have not heard about before, so thank you.

CONTI, Ms Perri, Private capacity

CHAIR: Welcome, Perri.

Ms Conti: I was not going to talk today but I have had a change of mind.

CHAIR: You are most welcome. As you have heard, we try to keep the opening statement to five minutes and then there will be questions from the committee.

Ms Conti: I am a victim of crime. My house was broken into at 3.30 in the morning while we were sleeping. They stole my car and they created havoc on the streets for four days. They were running people off the road. I had to end up putting up a post, 'Slash the tyres and smash the windscreen; I don't care,' to get the car off the road. I was forever ringing the police for any updates. They did get caught four nights later with another stolen car. Then it was up to me to constantly find out when it was going to court. There was nothing. I did all the chasing.

I lost my car for six months. I expected to be a victim of crime, to be honest. I always knew it was going to happen. I just did not know when. It has not really affected me in that way because I expected it. For six months my car was off the road, so we had to go and buy another car.

Both perpetrators got caught. One got six months—the same amount of time I was without a car. The other one got two years but there were multiple charges. I did ask how long he got for stealing my car and breaking into my house. He got six months. Then you have to do the cameras—you have to do this and you have to do that. We have a car rental business. We have had multiple cars stolen—multiple. Again, it is always us chasing the police: 'Have they been caught?' Then they go to court: 'Can you please notify us when they are going to court so I can be there?' The only time you get restitution is when you are in the courtroom. Then it is the judge who decides whether they can pay you restitution.

In my last case I did not get restitution because the judge said he was unable to pay. Who can say someone is unable to pay when in 12 months time he could win lotto? Who are they to say that we are not entitled to restitution for something that belongs to us and was stolen from us by someone who should not have been in our house or in our car? It is like we, the victims, are the criminals. We are treated as criminals.

Police are too busy to do their job. They are too busy out there picking up these juveniles and driving them home. The police are not able to do the job they are employed to do—policing. I talk to the police. Go down to Lake Street and you will see it every single day. There is a 10-year old who has pulled a knife on me outside the supermarket. Every day he is in Lake Street, in the City Place. You call the police and the police take half an hour, 20 minutes or an hour to get there, meanwhile he has stolen from every shop along the way. Every day he is back there in the City Place harassing people for money. The police pick him up and take him home. He jumps on the free bus and then he is back in town again harassing and stealing every single day. I worry that when my mother goes to a shopping centre she is going to be knocked over and have her bag stolen because she is 80 and looks vulnerable. This is how we live in Cairns.

I went to the first sitting of parliament. I have to say that I was absolutely disgusted that we have a government like this who sit there and do this. You are grown adults who cannot come together to stop the crime in the communities. I do not understand it. It is ridiculous. If it is a Liberal idea, Labor say, 'No. We're not going to do that because that is their idea. Just because we have more seats than you have, what we say goes.' This has to stop. Like this gentleman said, you are employed by us. Our taxes pay your wages. For you to sit in government and go tit for tat and heckle the other side, it is like children.

CHAIR: Perri, probably both sides of politics are guilty of that. Laura, do you have any questions for Perri?

Mrs GERBER: Question time is quite unique, but I have never been in a workplace like it, Perri. Thank you very much for your opening statement.

CHAIR: Will you start behaving at the next sitting?

Mrs GERBER: I will pass to Jon.

Mr KRAUSE: Perri, thank you for coming. You said there was an expectation that you would be a victim.

Ms Conti: That is true.

Mr KRAUSE: It is wrong. It should not be like that.

Ms Conti: It is wrong but that is a fact.

Mr KRAUSE: I understand that and I thank you for telling us that, but it should not be like that. You said your car was stolen. They broke into your home. Did they have to break into your home to get the car?

Ms Conti: Yes—3.30 in the morning.

Mr KRAUSE: They grabbed the keys from somewhere?

Ms Conti: Yes.

Mr KRAUSE: How many people were in the house at the time?

Ms Conti: Just me and my husband.

Mr KRAUSE: Are you still at that house?

Ms Conti: Yes.

Mr KRAUSE: Do you feel safe there?

Ms Conti: I do feel safe.

Mr KRAUSE: Are you still uneasy about the whole thing though?

Ms Conti: No, because I expected it. My husband woke me at six o'clock in the morning because he saw the front door open. He ran outside. There were my belongings scattered all the way down the street. We were protesting about crime in this town. All my belongings were thrown out of the car as they drove down the street. My husband and my neighbours were out there picking it all up.

Mr KRAUSE: Do you think you were targeted deliberately?

Ms Conti: No. I do not believe so, no. I was lucky. It sounds bad saying it, but I was lucky because I was the first house. They just needed a car. Our phones, our laptops, our iPads—nothing was touched. They just wanted the car to go and start breaking into houses. That is how it works.

Mrs GERBER: I think your story articulates how the support that is needed for victims of crime needs to be tailored. Someone else in your situation might be severely traumatised by what has happened to them and need ongoing support, whereas you say that because you had already come to terms with it—essentially you expected it—you are not in the same position as others who might be severely traumatised.

Ms Conti: Yes.

Mrs GERBER: Part of this inquiry is to get to the nub of the kind of support that victims of crime need.

Ms Conti: All I ask is for constant updates. It does not have to be a police officer in the police station. It could be a civilian working in the station who makes the call: 'Okay, we have just arrested the guy who stole your car. He will be going to court on this date, if you would like to do an impact statement or if you would like to be there.' I would watch the daily court lists every day. I managed to get his name, and every day I was spending my time looking at the daily court list to see when his case was on. I would go to court; it would be adjourned. I would go to court; it would be adjourned. This happened five times. The time that he did get charged I was unable to get there, but not once in the whole process was I notified about this guy.

Mrs GERBER: What you are talking about is that the one-stop shop, which all the other witnesses have talked about, needs to incorporate someone who is there to give information to victims of crime like yourself.

Ms Conti: It does, and it does not have to be a police officer. It can be a civilian and that is their job inside the police station—to update the victims step by step about what is happening and what is the process. This is what we need. This is what I wanted. This is what I asked for and I got nothing other than wasting my time over six months plus watching for when this guy was going to go to court and taking time off work.

CHAIR: This is the last question for this session. I am going to hand over to Jonty.

Ms BUSH: Thank you for your submission today. What I am really hearing is the need for frequent communication, particularly around key moments in a justice process—when there is an apprehension, when there is a mention, when it goes to trial. Some witnesses have also said they would prefer to have more communication when things are not happening—every month or every couple of months, just a phone call to say, 'Nothing is happening, but this is who I am and here is how you can reach me.' I am after your views about the frequency of communication you would have liked.

Ms Conti: When people become victims of crime it is very upsetting and very harrowing. Listening to this lady's story here today, I was totally shocked and appalled. Why is it up to people like us to have to keep on chasing information that affects people and their daily lives? It should be up to whatever body you form to keep us in the know as to what is going on. That is all we are asking for: we want to know what is going on. We are the victims here. To me it is all for the criminals. There is nothing for the victims. No-one gives a [REDACTED] about us. Excuse me.

Ms BUSH: That is okay. Some victims have also said to us that they do not want to know. I think what you are saying is there needs to be flexibility to respond to what a victim wants.

Ms Conti: If you want to know, you can know. If you do not want to know, you have the choice. You are given a choice. We need that. I wanted to know because of what this guy did. He broke into my home and threw all my belongings on the street and nearly T-boned a security guard going about his job. My car was passed around like it was a 20-cent piece. They were stealing fuel from petrol stations. Every Tom, Dick and Harry was driving my car. People say, 'How can you drive the car?' It is just a car. It is insured. It is just a car. I still have it. I still drive it but I do not think about who was driving my car. Maybe I am weird.

Ms BUSH: Everyone is different. That is okay.

CHAIR: That concludes this hearing. I thank everyone who has participated today and all those who have helped to organise this hearing. I thank our Hansard reporters. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. I declare the public hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 4.10 pm.