



Speech by

**Hon. M. FOLEY**

**MEMBER FOR YERONGA**

---

Hansard 26 August 1998

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Victims of Crime**

**Hon. M. J. FOLEY** (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.43 a.m.), by leave: Several weeks ago I outlined to this House steps the Queensland Labor Government was taking to strengthen the rights of victims of crime. A discussion paper on the Criminal Offence Victims Act 1995 was launched last month, detailing options for giving teeth to the fundamental principles for dealing with victims, outlined in the legislation.

Over the past few weeks I have undertaken an extensive consultation process, meeting with victims and people who work closely with them. This consultation process will continue. I have met with representatives from domestic violence support groups, women's refuges, sexual assault support groups, victims of crime associations, other support groups and social workers, as well as with members of the Queensland Police Service, prosecutors and other court staff. I have held forums at Cairns, Townsville, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Gladstone, Proserpine, Rockhampton, Bray Park and Booval and plan to hold more meetings in the near future. The closing date for submissions was 4 September; however, owing to the overwhelming public interest in the topic, submissions will be received until the end of September.

These forums have highlighted two aspects of how victims of crime are treated by the criminal justice system on which I wish to comment. Firstly, the meetings have brought home the good work currently carried out by police, prosecutors and support workers in providing the information and support victims of crime need and deserve. Secondly, they have also brought home the fact that more work needs to be done. For example, a women's refuge worker at Rockhampton told how a woman who had been abused by her partner was not informed when he was released from custody. The abused woman opened her front door one day to find her tormentor on the doorstep.

Domestic violence is a serious crime which can leave victims horribly scarred, emotionally as well as physically. The review my department is undertaking is specifically aimed at trying to prevent incidents such as the one I have outlined from occurring. We must ensure that victims of crime who wish to be informed are informed when offenders are released from custody and that they are further informed of the progress of the offenders' cases through the criminal justice system. A person who has been bashed or raped does not deserve to suffer further trauma as a result of the criminal justice system. Victims of crime in Queensland deserve better.

The review my department is undertaking is groundbreaking work designed to shift the focus of the criminal justice system back on to victims, who have for too long been left on the outer and sometimes treated as little more than as another exhibit in a court case.

---