



Speech by

**Hon. M. FOLEY**

**MEMBER FOR YERONGA**

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Hansard 4 March 1999

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Task Force on Women and the Criminal Code**

**Hon. M. J. FOLEY** (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: Last November, the Minister for Women's Policy, Judy Spence, and I launched the Task Force on Women and the Criminal Code, which comprises 20 members from diverse backgrounds. Those members include representatives of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, the Queensland Police Service and other Government agencies, along with representatives of community organisations such as the Women's Legal Service and the Country Women's Association.

Since the last sittings of this House, I have travelled to a number of regional centres in Queensland to consult with women on how our criminal justice system can be made fairer. Together with members of the task force, I travelled to Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Toowoomba to let women in those cities know they have a chance to make a real difference to how our criminal justice system works. I am pleased to report that, at this early stage of the consultation process, the importance of this project is well recognised and Queensland women are taking this long-overdue opportunity to contribute to important law reform.

Unfortunately, many women continue to experience inequality before the law and in access to justice, particularly when they are the victims of violence. This task force is examining how women are treated by the criminal justice system, whether they are the victims of crime or the alleged perpetrators. It also is examining whether court practices and procedures need to be changed. Some of the specific areas it is looking at include—

the treatment of women who are victims of violence, such as rape;

women who commit violent acts against others and the circumstances under which they commit those acts, such as the murder of a violent partner;

crimes of poverty, such as fraud; and

sentencing options, such as: do community service orders work for women with children?

Ultimately, the work of this task force will help make our criminal justice system fairer for all Queenslanders. While this Government continues its approach of being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, we are continuing to work on real reforms of our criminal justice system to make real changes where they are most needed. This week, legislation was introduced to strengthen Queensland's stalking laws. Further legislation will be introduced after the task force report is received later this year.

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