




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.23 pm): I too rise to make a contribution in the consideration of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's report No. 50 of the 56th Parliament titled *Examination of Queensland Audit Office Report 6: 2018-19: Delivering coronial services*. Whenever I speak in this place as the member for Southern Downs, I endeavour to speak from the perspective of the people of Southern Downs. I think we would all agree that that is our role here. Therefore, I would like to talk about coronial services and the implications of the Auditor-General's report from the perspective of a constituent who has a particular view to express on this matter. In the conclusion of his report, the Auditor-General stated—

Queensland's coronial system is under stress and is not effectively and efficiently supporting coroners or families. If left unaddressed, structural and system issues, will further erode its ability to provide services beyond the short-term.

Senior people across the system described to us a system that is failing. The coronial system relies on the dedication of staff and good will amongst agencies but lacks system-wide cohesion, with no agency having responsibility for leadership, accountability, planning, and reporting across the system.

This is contributing to:

- ineffective planning
- insufficient and inadequate resourcing and funding
- inadequate case management practices
- a lack of integration between agencies' priorities and systems.

There is more, but I think that illustrates the picture fairly well.

Yesterday when I spoke in the debate on the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, I made the point—and I know that other members made the point—that we need to resource the Coroner adequately because coronial services are very important to Queenslanders, particularly those who need them because of tragic circumstances. That leads me to the matter of Mrs Jodie Lock. I will not go into the details of her case because it is currently being investigated, but I can speak in broader terms. Mrs Lock lost her husband not long ago and she has requested a coronial inquest. I believe that steps have been taken in the normal way towards identifying if that will be possible.

Mrs Lock has asked me to read to the House the following, which reflects her fears—and I believe the fears of many others—that coronial services may be slow at the moment because of a lack of resourcing, a lack of coordination and so forth. She talks with an authentic voice about how important coronial services are to her. She states—

A coronial inquest would provide a factual insight into the events contributing to and causing the death of an otherwise healthy family member.

Additionally this process is essential to provide answers and some form of closure for family members. The family would like answers and would like transparency and accountability to be upheld.

A death which family members believe could have been prevented takes a big toll on the psychological health of the family. Having the Coroner find out what happened and why is so important to helping provide peace for those who are left behind and to making sure it won't happen to someone else.

...

If a victim impact statement were to be made the list is endless.

I think that sums it up very well.

If you are in the tragic situation of having a loved one or a relative die in circumstances that indicate the involvement of a coroner in terms of an inquest, it is a process that you would wish to occur expeditiously, certainly in the planning stages and then getting to the stage of determining if an inquest can be held. In the debate this week we heard that there has been a lamentable increase in the number of cases waiting two or more years to make it to the coroner. When you think of real people such as Mrs Lock, who lives in Warwick, you can see the human dimension.

The Auditor-General's investigations into the delivery of coronial services were timely. The insights of the Auditor-General were very vivid and useful. I urge the government to take them on board, not only purely along the lines of what has been expressed in the report but also reading between the lines. I believe that the report indicates that what is necessary is not just reforms but also better funding and resourcing for the Coroner. I believe that is what the people of Southern Downs expect. I speak with absolute certainty when I say that that is what Mrs Lock in Warwick expects.