




Speech By  
**Jennifer Howard**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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### **JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (3.08 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. This bill continues the Palaszczuk government's proud commitment to deliver justice for Queenslanders. It builds on our work to make Queensland communities safer and protect our most vulnerable. A total of 33 acts and four regulations have been amended in this bill providing for fairness, legislative clarity and the improved administration of our courts and government processes.

Some of the more significant amendments include ensuring that all future coronial inquests come within the ambit of the Coroners Act 2003 regardless of when a death or disappearance occurred. It allows the Queensland Human Rights Commission to accept out-of-time complaints under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991, and it enhances protections for vulnerable witnesses under the Evidence Act 1977. These are just a few of the amendments comprising this sweeping omnibus bill, and together they ensure that Queensland has a more efficient and fair court system. This bill also builds on the Palaszczuk government's numerous justice reforms delivered over the past five years.

We have strengthened the legislation, making it easier for victims of crime, child abuse and domestic violence to seek justice for the crimes committed against them. We have enhanced our court system and justice agencies by boosting resources and providing groundbreaking programs that have helped address underlying causes of offending.

Ipswich has its fair share of people who are doing it tough, and they sometimes feel as though they have been given the wrong end of the stick when it comes to the justice system, whether they are the victims of crime or the perpetrators. Many of my constituents often do not have the money to find the best lawyers to fight on their behalf, to pursue wrongs committed against them or to fight off charges. People in Ipswich benefit from a Labor government because Labor is committed to reforming the justice system and making it easier for them to access justice and legal services when they most need it.

For example, in 2018, Ipswich became the third location in Queensland to operate the Court Link program, an initiative designed to address and overcome the underlying causes of offending, such as substance abuse, homelessness and mental illness. Court Link provides support to these people to help them stay out of our courts and jails and reduces the costs on our court system and community. Another fantastic initiative is the Murri Court. In last year's state budget, Ipswich was given \$899,000 to re-establish a Murri Court at a total cost of \$4.1 million over five years. The Murri Court was a hard fought win for Ipswich, particularly as the former Newman government had scrapped Ipswich's previous Murri Court in 2012. With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people overrepresented in our criminal justice system, abolishing the Murri Court was a retrograde step by the LNP, even though the evidence showed that it was working.

I believe more needs to be done for other members of my community who have particular support needs and challenges, particularly victims of domestic violence. A specialist domestic and family violence court in Ipswich would be a step in the right direction to improve access to justice and support for victims, and it would reduce the trauma of having to attend a criminal court for DV matters. Ipswich

comes fourth in the state for lodging DVO applications and fifth in the state for breaches of DVOs. In fact, over the year from 2018 to 2019, DVO breaches in Ipswich increased by 29 per cent. Over the past four years, Ipswich has seen 1,341 charges lodged for domestic and family violence offences and 155 strangulation offences.

In 2017, the Griffith Criminology Institute evaluated the specialist DV court trial in Southport and surveyed two groups of victim participants—one group who attended the Southport specialist DV court and another comparison group who attended the Ipswich Magistrates Court. In the institute's report, they found that the Southport group had consistently higher rates of satisfaction with the specialist DV court. The Southport group also perceived higher levels of procedural justice, with 85 per cent of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were 'treated with respect', that the 'court process was fair' and that the 'decision was fair'. In comparison, only 61.5 per cent of Ipswich participants agreed that the court process is currently fair.

Improving access to justice to vulnerable members of the community is what Labor governments do best. The Premier and the Attorney-General should be commended for introducing legislative reforms that improve Queensland's justice system, including the amendments that fall under this bill. Only a Labor government in Queensland could have introduced and passed into law the Human Rights Act, which came into force on 1 January this year. Only a Labor government could have committed to reforms implementing key recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and pass laws making it easier for child abuse survivors to sue institutions that neglected to protect them. Only a Labor government could have introduced bold new electoral laws capping election donations and spending to ensure that future Queensland elections are fairer, transparent and more just.

Only a Labor government could have delivered criminal justice reforms, such as making sure 17-year-old offenders are not put into adult prisons, passing lemon laws to protect Queenslanders who purchased defective vehicles and introducing revenge porn laws making it an offence to share intimate images without consent. Like the amendments in this bill, these reforms together improve access to justice for all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.