




Speech By
Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2022

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Sexual Assault Statistics

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (2.37 pm): Unfortunately, I rise in the House this afternoon not with good news but with the latest ABS data that was released on the victims of recorded crime which paints a very bleak picture for Queensland women. While the number of victims of sexual assault rose around the country by an average of 13 per cent—which I think we all agree is unacceptable—the numbers of victims of sexual assault in Queensland increased by 35 per cent. In New South Wales, there was an increase of two per cent, and in Victoria there was an increase of 12 per cent. To put that into context, an increase of 35 per cent is outrageous. It is disgraceful.

In *Hear her voice* report 2, it lays bare the massive gaps in this government's response to sexual assault. Victim survivors told the taskforce that their experiences with police were so traumatising that they voluntarily withdrew their complaint. I have since met with women across this state who have considered doing so.

The recording equipment of the QPS is of a low quality with feedback from the DPP that they are losing cases because of the low standard of quality. In relation to rape kits, women and girls in Queensland do not have consistent access to timely forensic medical examinations when they have been sexually assaulted. I do recall members across the House, including the health minister, accusing me of politicking when rape victims were coming forward to me with complaints about the forensic lab in this state. Problems have been identified. I quote from page 168 of the report—

With Queensland's ability to provide women and girls with timely access to high quality forensic medical care since 2019.

While I note the LNP did hold office for three years, this government has certainly held office for a lot longer.

Women have travelled up to 1,300 kilometres for an examination only to be turned back due to miscommunication. That is 1,300 kilometres after being traumatised through a sexual assault. Others are waiting for nine hours in a dusty room next to a COVID ward in the clothes they wore during an attack. They were just left to sit in their trauma.

Dr Cathy Lincoln, the deputy director of the Gold Coast forensic medical unit, confirmed that there are simply not enough trained forensic medical physicians in Queensland at present. It was also confirmed that the take-up of the training by the clinical forensic medical unit had been very slow. With a 35 per cent increase in the number of victims and the fact that in communities such as Gladstone you can turn up at the hospital and there is no-one qualified to undertake a rape kit, women victims across our state are left without access to justice.

Not only do we have issues with the examination of DNA evidence in our forensic lab—and thank you to the advocacy of journalists, victims and the opposition—but this report has also found that the kits themselves that are used in Queensland are of an inferior quality to those used in other states. In New South Wales sealed DNA-free kits contain DNA decontamination kits and a large number of swabs

and related apparatus. The kits in Queensland that are used come in an open bag with only six swabs, and this is half the swabs generally required to fulfil a forensic examination. Worse still, we have heard of vulnerable women without Medicare cards being charged for rape kits. It took the Leader of the Opposition and me to call it out in the media after it came to light in a tabled report. It was one week before the health minister acted, and the response from the Minister for Women was nothing short of appalling for abdicating her responsibility to the Minister for Health.

A commission of inquiry will be held into the quality of the Queensland Forensic and Scientific Services. This should not delay the development of interim agreements between Queensland Health, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service. It is about time that the Minister for Women took the job seriously and stopped abdicating her responsibility and instead advocated to her fellow ministers in the cabinet room.

This government talks about women's safety, but women are not safe under this government. That has been proven with the women who have come forward to speak with me from the Gold Coast to the Toowoomba region, from Gladstone and Far North Queensland—women who have no right to criminal justice because of the failings of not a system but of people, of those opposite, because of the lack of leadership, the lack of responsibility and the lack of a willingness to go forward, to work together and to make change. These are real women who need action now.