



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR COOPER

Record of Proceedings, 18 August 2022

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (3.13 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the serious vilification and hate crimes report which was tabled in January this year. As others have said, it was such a meaningful inquiry to work on both in terms of the conclusions and the recommendations that the report has made and for what we believe it will deliver for vulnerable Queenslanders.

It is the process that the committee adopted in this inquiry that I really valued particularly. I would like to speak principally to that because this report would not be what it was without us making some adjustments to the committee process.

All members of the committee were acutely aware of the need to capture the experiences and the wishes of those Queenslanders who are subjected to hate speech and hate acts. First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, the LGBTIQ community, disability and women are disproportionately vilified at a far greater rate and in a far more targeted and deliberate way than most in our community. We also know that for a range of reasons, be it through cultural sensitivities, perhaps having a history of torture and trauma, a general fear of and mistrust in government systems or generally a sense of shame of what they have experienced, individuals from these communities may not actively seek to engage or feel safe engaging in a parliament committee process.

We as a committee discussed this. I would like to particularly acknowledge the chair and deputy chair in their leadership on this issue. We decided together to attempt some different approaches to how we might engage with these target groups. We worked with Multicultural Australia to outreach to our CALD communities. They, like the committee, were determined to make sure that the voices of culturally and linguistically diverse people were included in the committee inquiry and in the final report.

We approved the use of video submissions and received 43 video submissions from CALD people, in addition to the 82 written submissions we received right across the sector. What that did was allow us to hear directly from them—in their words, uninterrupted—about their experiences, the things that have been said to them, the things that have been done to them, the things that have been said about them. We did not constrain those video submissions—and some of them were quite lengthy and comprehensive. I want to acknowledge the members of our committee who, like me, listened to every single one of those 43 video submissions in their entirety. We heard what they said and vowed as a committee to make recommendations that would help them feel safe and, importantly, feel like they belong and that they can participate fully here in Queensland.

Throughout the process I was again reminded of the challenges that our committee and I am sure all committees experience in getting a representative response rate from our First Nations people. I think this is a challenge that we need to keep turning our mind to—how do we make these committee processes more inviting and culturally safe for First Nations people—because their voices in all of our inquiries but particularly in this inquiry were really important. I want to say to our Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people that your voices in these parliamentary committees are what really matter. Your voice counts. Our committees do have the flexibility to change things about the process to be more culturally safe for you to participate—and we really need you to. Complementary to that of course is that when First Nations people participate in these processes we need to set aside perhaps our own beliefs and our own experiences and listen.

This report makes 17 recommendations. The reform recommended will address a few key areas including removing the barriers to reporting—which we know very much exist. Importantly, there is a recommendation to improve data collection and record keeping. We heard from QPS particularly about the struggles they have around tagging particular incidents of crime as being a hate crime and not just letting it get washed up as general graffiti or an assault charge.

Other recommendations include expanding the protected attributes to afford greater protection from vilification on the grounds of gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics; adjusting legislative thresholds to reflect the serious nature of hate crime and vilification; giving a greater voice for victims through restorative justice—that was a key theme that came through, and I am personally very proud that that is included as a recommendation; challenges associated with online vilification; and, importantly, as others have said, education. We all have an obligation here.

I want to make the comment that in this inquiry and I think in society generally when we talk about education we seem to orient that toward our schools and our education providers and say that it is a responsibility for schools to provide education. Actually it is a responsibility for all of us whether we are in community groups, sporting groups or here as members in this place. It is something we all need to adhere to.

(Time expired)