




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

---

Record of Proceedings, 26 May 2022

## LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.47 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee Report No. 22, 57th Parliament, *Inquiry into serious vilification and hate crimes*, tabled on 31 January 2022.

This report is dedicated to the memory of Mr Duncan Pegg, the former member for Stretton. In his time as the member for Stretton, Duncan fought fiercely for the very multicultural community he loved so dearly. I extend my sincere gratitude to Duncan's family for allowing the committee to include the dedication in our report.

Queensland does not have a piece of legislation dedicated to serious vilification and hate crimes. There are legislative provisions in various pieces of state and Commonwealth legislation that seek to respond to these issues, but it is clear from the evidence received in the course of our inquiry that people are still experiencing the devastating effects of vilification and hate crimes, and more needs to be done to address these insidious problems in our society. It is equally clear that what is needed is cultural change in our approach to such matters—unblinking recognition that such problems exist in our society and at levels that are wholly unacceptable. The committee recognised that a multifaceted and concerted approach is what is needed in order to combat the pernicious and destructive thinking and behaviour which manifests in serious vilification and hate crimes.

To that end, the recommendations made by the committee intended to achieve change by a combination of education, community empowerment and intergovernmental cooperation. While each of us have a moral responsibility to ensure that our conduct is appropriate and to ensure that we teach our children to behave properly towards each other, the unfortunate reality in our society is that there will be some people who will traverse the bounds of proper behaviour. For those persons, a deterrent sanction is needed.

The committee recommended legislative change to broaden the rubric of both criminal and civil law to capture those behaviours and impose sanctions in respect of same. What is sometimes needed for healing and a different tomorrow is restorative practices. To that end, the committee included a recommendation that the Queensland government develop a restorative justice strategy in consultation with affected communities.

Social media is a powerful communication tool in modern society. Unfortunately it has, at times, provided a platform for those who seek to harm others, very often without fear or real threat of consequences. Heartless, foolish, unintelligent and damaging content can be posted by cowards who cloak themselves in the anonymity of the internet, knowing that they will likely never be held accountable for what they say or the damage they do.

The ever-increasing prominence of social media platforms in society means that 'big tech' also needs to step up to the plate and moderate abhorrent and offensive content. The proliferation of online hate speech is not solely a Queensland problem. It is a national and global problem. Regulating social media and other platforms which enable online vilification must be addressed by the governments of Australia working together.

I thank every individual who contributed to this inquiry. Without these individuals sharing their experiences, the committee would not have been able to understand in quite the same way the very personal and devastating impacts that vilification and hate crimes have had on members of our community.

COVID pandemic restrictions limited the amount of face-to-face community consultation that was possible. We did, however, facilitate the taking of video and recorded submissions, thus permitting contributions to the inquiry that may not otherwise have been able to be made. I am hopeful that this pivot to video and recorded submissions will be something that we can continue to do into the future, thus facilitating and encouraging increased input into the work of committees, especially from First Nations communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and remote and regional communities. My heartfelt wish is that this report is a precursor to real social change and that all individuals in our society take up this challenge of making our community one in which everyone is safe.