




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2023

**VICTIMS OF CRIME ASSISTANCE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.45 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Victims of Crime Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which amends the Victims of Crime Assistance Act that established the Financial Assistance Scheme that seeks to help victims of acts of violence to recover by providing financial assistance and that includes both primary victims and related victims. The bill seeks to increase the maximum amount of assistance for victims, which has not increased since 2009 when the act commenced. In 2017, funeral assistance was boosted from \$6,000 to \$8,000.

Separate inquiries undertaken by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, the independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence and the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee made various recommendations to increase the levels of support provided to victims of crime, including financial support provided to victims of acts of violence. The bill seeks to provide support for victims in the immediate future by increasing payments to reflect increases in financial pressures and increases in the cost of services. It will also seek to address broader reviews such as of the Financial Assistance Scheme by KPMG.

Often in my electorate office I meet with victims of crime and particularly victims of violent crime. Victims come to talk to me about their experiences. Many are on different time lines in their journey after becoming a victim of crime. Many have had different experiences and have been victims of a wide variety of crimes. Some are children. Many are still going through the grief and trauma that comes with being a victim of violent crime. Some people are still going through a court process. There are all sorts of challenges associated with that for victims.

As the member for Toohey pointed out, trying to understand the world of the legal and court systems and processes can leave people feeling quite lost, especially if they are still grieving as a result of becoming a victim of crime. In my area, many victims struggle to access counselling. We have a shortage of psychologists. Accessing counselling for victims has been a challenge that victims have expressed to me. Victims can struggle with grief for many years.

I want to pay particular tribute to a couple of victims of crime who have done outstanding work in my community, in the face of the grief and trauma that they have experienced when they have lost a child. Three years ago, Cheryl O'Sullivan tragically lost her daughter, Karen Gilliland, who was murdered by her estranged husband. It was an awful situation. Cheryl misses Karen every day as do Karen's three young children. I think it is quite amazing that Cheryl has channelled her grief and trauma in such a positive way by supporting other victims of domestic and family violence. She really wants to create that change.

There is also Shane Yore, whose son was tragically killed in a car accident. The driver of the vehicle was subsequently charged and convicted, but Rhys Yore was only a teenager and he tragically lost his life as a result of the crime. Shane now has channelled his grief and trauma in such a positive way, being recognised this year with a Livingstone Shire Council Australian of the Year Award, because

of the road safety campaign and the training program which he has now created and runs at our local schools. It is called You Choose Road Safety. It is just amazing that Shane, in the face of all of that grief, has been able to give young people lessons and teach them about the impacts of their choices, particularly on the roads. I really look forward to this bill rolling out. It is gold standard. When we look at how victims of crime are financially supported across the country, Queensland really is leading the way. I look forward to other jurisdictions following suit. I commend the bill to the House.