




Speech By
Corrine McMillan

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2023

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

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (2.15 pm): I rise to contribute to the Victims of Crime Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. At the outset, I thank those individuals and organisations who made written submissions on the bill. The committee acknowledges the work of Victim Assist Queensland, the Queensland Police Service and the many community organisations that provide vital support, advice and assistance to vulnerable Queenslanders and their families who are victims of violent crime in Queensland. I also thank the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and our Parliamentary Service staff for their assistance. I would like to thank acting chair Chris Whiting MP and all members of the committee for their hard work and valuable contribution to the examination of this bill.

The bill proposes to amend Queensland's financial assistance scheme, established by the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009, to increase the maximum amount of financial assistance payable to victims of crime. It also proposes to increase the number of council members of the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council. This is intended to enhance the representation of victims and their interests.

The committee considered the views expressed in submissions and by witnesses at the committee's public hearing as well as briefing material from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. The committee is satisfied that sufficient regard has been given to fundamental legislative principles, to the rights and liberties of individuals and to the institution of parliament, and that any limitations of human rights as set out in the Human Rights Act 2019 are reasonable and justifiable. The committee makes two additional recommendations in relation to enhancing support available for victims of crime and ensuring financial assistance for victims reflects inflation and current cost-of-living expenses.

In May 2023 the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee conducted an inquiry into support provided to victims of crime. In preparing its report, the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee held hearings in Brisbane, Cairns, the Gold Coast, Ipswich, Logan, Rockhampton and Townsville. The LASC report recommendations focused on: improving the coordination of services; reviewing the charter of victims' rights; facilitating easy access to information; developing a trauma informed training framework across government agencies; investing in support services for victims as well as developing a long-term plan for restorative justice; and providing youth justice conferencing. Relevant to this bill, recommendation 14 of the LASC report states—

That the Queensland Government urgently review the financial assistance scheme including whether the original intent and objective of the scheme are being met as defined in the Victims of Crime Act 2009.

In response to the findings and recommendations arising from these separate inquiries, the Queensland government is currently considering wider reforms to the FAS. Due to inflation and increased financial pressures, the bill aims to ensure victims are supported in the immediate future

while broader reviews are undertaken. This is consistent with recommendation 14 of the LASC report which called for an urgent review of the FAS. I thank the chair, the member for Toohey, and all members of the LASC for their comprehensive and detailed work on the inquiry. This inquiry underpinned our work as a committee and underpins much of the content of this bill. The committee should be congratulated for their work.

In recent years, separate inquiries have also called for significant reform within Queensland's justice system. These inquiries have produced the following reports: in December 2021, the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report *Hear her voice—report 1: Addressing coercive control and domestic and family violence in Queensland*; in July 2022, the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report *Hear her voice—report 2: Women and girls' experiences of the criminal justice system*; and in November 2022, the Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence report *A call for change*, an inquiry into QPS responses.

It is accurate to say that the Palaszczuk government has been diligently working on evidence-based legislative reform for some years. This is what good governments do. This bill will make a significant contribution to the lives of Queenslanders who are victims of crime. I commend this bill to the House.