




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

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (2.49 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the Victims of Crime Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 as a member of the Community Support and Services Committee that scrutinised the bill. I first want to acknowledge committee members and the good work of the committee in scrutinising the legislation, the secretariat and all of the committee staff who also assisted with the bill. I thank them for their time and input.

The primary objectives of the Victims of Crime Assistance Bill are: to increase the upper limits for financial assistance payments and special assistance payments available to victims; to increase the upper limits for payable funeral expenses and distress payments; to recategorise domestic violence as a category B act of violence for the purpose of special assistance payments; to increase the membership of the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council to no more than 14 members to enable the appointment of a person with lived experience as a victim of crime and another person; and to require that at least one member of QSAC must be a person with lived experience as a victim of crime.

At the outset I want to say that I support the bill, in particular the possibility of victims of crime receiving further assistance, including DV victims, to better access further support. In doing so, I want to commend the Voice for Victims campaign that has focused attention on the victims of crime and in particular on the failings of this government to adequately listen to victims and acknowledge that there is a crisis. Sadly, some Labor government MPs do not think there is a crisis, particularly in youth crime. They think it is a media beat-up, an exaggeration, or that victims have brought things on themselves. The Premier herself does not seem to accept that it is a crisis. How can the government fix the youth crime crisis while ever it ignores the level of crisis and chaos and ignores the LNP's solutions based on the community's views? The Voice for Victims movement, media, the LNP's hard work in this space and other forms of public pressure appear to have forced the Premier's hand with this bill. Increasing the assistance to victims in some areas has not been in the government's mind for a long time, but suddenly it is now.

The Palaszczuk government's experiment of relaxed youth justice laws in 2015 and fewer police has left communities in a state of chaos and crisis as youth crime has exploded across Queensland. The result, sadly, has been that many more Queenslanders have become victims of crime. Victims of crime themselves have felt silenced by this government. They have continually felt that their needs are put behind the needs of offenders. The government has largely ignored victims, and the data reveals that the number of victims sadly is increasing.

During the committee briefing and hearing, various questions were asked by members of the committee. Committee members requested government data from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General on the number of victims of crime and the financial assistance provided to victims of crime, among other areas. The government's own data corroborates what we already know: that crime

rates are up, that there are more victims and that the cost to assist victims has gone up. The department advised, as reported in the committee report—I particularly reference the statement of reservation—

In the 2021-22 Crime Report published by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office, there were 64,540 victims ... recorded by the Queensland Police Service ...

This represents a 49.2 per cent increase in total recorded victims over the previous year. Further—

... there was a 54.4% increase in financial assistance applications received by VAQ in 2022-23 (7,621) when compared with 2021-22 ...

There was a 54 per cent increase. Crime is up. The number of victims is up. The number of financial assistance applications from victims is up.

It is important to understand priorities. The LNP has put out a priorities plan, a document which prioritises making our community safer. On Sunday, 22 October, with 12 months to go until the election, the Leader of the Opposition, David Crisafulli, launched the LNP's blueprint for the future of Queensland. The Right Priorities for Queensland's Future outlines the key priorities for an LNP government, focusing on the issues that matter most to Queenslanders. Making our communities safer is a right priority area and will guide further policy and decisions impacting on Queenslanders and, in my patch, particularly Redlanders.

Unlike the government, we have listened to victims of Labor's crime crisis. We have turned up to town hall crime forums and large gatherings outside of parliament, but the Premier has been missing in action. She cannot be found. She ducks and weaves from victims' groups. She picks and chooses selected victims and victims' groups purely on her own terms.

I want to acknowledge the victims of crime support groups across the state that work hard to support victims. I single out one group in the Redlands Coast particularly—Thornlands Concerned Residents. Adam and Natalie Cirone have suffered as victims of crime and are doing something about it. They formed the Thornlands Concerned Residents group to stand up against youth crime and support other victims of crime. They visited parliament, along with Capalaba resident Karen Oliver and several other local victims, to stand up on the youth crime crisis. The local group of seven residents told their stories of home invasions, acts of violence perpetrated against family members, drunken behaviour, car thefts and the torching of local playgrounds. The Cirones claim to have been subjected to ever-increasing attacks and home break-ins amidst growing crime fears in the area in which they live. Mr Cirone said, 'We don't feel safe in our homes. We can't take our kids to the park behind our house. The park is not safe—explosions, melted park equipment, you name it.'

As victims, they have suffered windscreens smashed in, had their garage door kicked in and their son terrorised. They have had to sell their caravan to fund additional security measures in their family home and they also bought a dog in a bid to stop the break-ins and damage. Mr Cirone said, 'We feel like the beautiful suburb we bought in 10 years ago is now a war zone.'

They recently attended a gathering of locals at a Thornlands park, and I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition, David Crisafulli, and the shadow minister for police, Dale Last, for caring enough to attend such events of victims and others coming together. Redlands Coast LNP candidates Amanda Stoker and Rebecca Young were also there to listen to local victims of crime and other concerned citizens tell their stories and to support them. Redlands LNP candidates believe there is a crisis. They turn up to hear victims' groups, they attend victims' public meetings and are doing something about the crisis. We heard terrible stories from victims of crime about violent machete attacks, terrifying home invasions, stolen cars, the ram raid of a local IGA supermarket, businesses broken into repeatedly—and the list of crimes against these victims goes on.

One victim, Brad, was bashed by a teen gang just walking home. He says, 'I noticed he had a machete. I was hit on the forearm. I was hospitalised. I had stitches in my arm, my eyebrow and a fractured cheekbone.' 7News reported on the crimes around Thornlands saying, 'Residents in the area say they're fed up with escalating crime as new figures show more Queenslanders are scared to walk their neighbourhood at night.' Who could ever forget the tragic deaths of Matt Field and Kate Leadbetter and their unborn baby, Miles, at the hands of a young criminal driving a stolen car?

The Palaszczuk government is in chaos and crisis when it comes to youth crime. While they have stopped listening, we will keep listening to Queenslanders about their concerns and drive the change needed to keep our communities safe. The increase in the number of victims of crime is yet another indicator that crime is out of control, that this government has failed to arrest the youth crime crisis gripping our state and that victims have not been receiving the support they deserve from this government for some time. While the bill goes some way towards assisting victims, the real solution is to change the government. To solve the youth crime crisis, show Labor the door in '24.