




Speech By  
**Michael Berkman**

**MEMBER FOR MAIWAR**

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

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.34 pm): I rise to make my contribution on the Victims of Crime Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I can make it clear at the outset that we support this bill. It is uncontentious and sensible legislation that the Greens can get behind without hesitation. In simple terms, increasing the amount of financial assistance that is available to victims of crime is a simple, straightforward and, I would suggest, much needed change.

There were some interesting questions raised in the review around the possibility of the indexation of these payments rather than relying on legislative change at each point. In response to these queries, the Community Support and Services Committee heard that the KPMG review which is underway was likely, at least to some extent, to consider these issues. It is good to know they are at least being contemplated. It does make sense for a less onerous process such as regulation-making to deal with increases in payments or for there even to be a simple process of indexation that allows them to keep up with inflation over time so that victims of crime can meet the expense of the supports they might need in the aftermath of a relevant crime.

It did raise questions for me about why exactly it is necessary to get a consultancy like KPMG to look into these issues. This is not the kind of issue that I would have thought necessarily requires external expertise. You would hope that, rather than continuing down this path of overreliance on external consultants like the KPMGs and PwCs of the world, we might see the government instead investing in the Public Service and building capacity to work on providing this kind of advice and supporting the government internally rather than just forking out to consultants. Nonetheless, I suppose I look forward to seeing the outcomes of that review.

Another change proposed in the bill is the recategorisation of domestic violence offences from category D to category B. I think that is particularly warranted given what we know, especially at the moment, around the number of DV offences and instances that police are having to deal with and the number of victims who obviously need special assistance payments to deal with the most immediate consequences of incidents of domestic violence.

The expansion of the Queensland Sentencing and Advisory Council to increase the number of members and additionally to allow for the inclusion of a person with lived experience as a victim of crime just seems sensible, so again we have no qualms in supporting that. Indeed, I would argue that that should sit alongside a much broader move towards involving people with lived experience in all manner of government decision-making—whether that is lived experience of crime, disability or any number of other features of disadvantage that people might deal with in the community.

I did want to take a moment to touch on the committee's recommendation 2. This was raised by some submitters and the member for Cook touched on this a moment ago. People who are experiencing particular vulnerability and receive large one-off payments under this scheme might find themselves in need of additional support. That is especially the case for young people, who need some additional

guidance or financial assistance in terms of how they might deal with those payments and set themselves up better in the long term, especially in the context of whatever trauma and consequences they are dealing with in the fallout of the incident of crime.

It goes without saying that none of us want to see crime in our communities, especially violent crime. Anyone who has experienced violent crime has a good reason to demand more from the government in this space and to see that our communities are kept safer. However, at the core of this conversation we need to remember that exposing people, especially young people, to policing and punitive responses does nothing to prevent crime. Policing is a response after the fact of crime. We know that exposure to cops, courts and especially detention and prisons only makes young people more likely to offend, creates more victims of crime in the future and makes our community ultimately less safe.

In any conversation around victims of crime, we need to remember the importance of avoiding the kind of criminogenic policy that this government has leaned into so hard over the last few years and, I will say it again, which they have done so proudly. We consistently hear the rhetoric about how tough on crime they are. There is a contest between the government and the opposition in this state about who can be tougher on crime, when in fact the consequence is an increase in recidivism and an increase in the seriousness of offending that we see from young people. The mind boggles at how the message is not getting through. The experts and advocates have been telling governments for years—

**An honourable member:** Decades.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Decades, that is a fair observation. As long as there has been research on this topic, it has been clear that locking kids up—the punitive responses—only makes the community less safe and it is time the government just changed tack. We have got to be more sensible about this, otherwise we are only going to create more victims of crime and see our communities less safe.

In closing, I thank the secretariat as always for their support. They do an extraordinary job under very tight time frames—time frames that I would suggest this parliament needs to look very hard at. Applying the six-week minimum inquiry period to essentially every piece of legislation that comes before the House really does deprive us of the opportunity to scrutinise it properly and it is something that should not be the norm. Nonetheless, the committee secretariat do an extraordinary job in supporting us to conduct these inquiries in the time we have available. Thanks kindly to the secretary, the secretariat and my fellow committee members for all the work done on this inquiry.