




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 30 March 2023

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Parliamentary Committee System

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (2.43 pm): The operation of this parliament's committees is crucial to our Queensland democracy and how MPs as representatives of our communities are able to effect the changes they seek. This process is to ensure an opportunity for all Queenslanders to express their opinion on legislative changes and have these views published and publicly considered by committees in their inquiries. Given the Queensland parliament is unicameral, our committee system acts as a de facto upper house, and its efficient functioning is vital.

On 15 May 2019—yes, four years ago—I spoke in this House regarding identified flaws in the operation of this system. Extensive research by our interns over two years clearly demonstrated why a review was needed. This included chairs having casting votes, the inability to have minutes released into the public domain as a standard, limits on questioning during the estimates process and short consultation and inquiry time frames amongst others. The Coaldrake report identified that committees must be given independence in oversight of integrity bodies, including budgets and appointments, separate from executive government. In October 2021 streamed live across Queensland was a panel which saw all basically agree that the committee system does need tweaking. Requests to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly for a review have so far not yielded any results, and this has been detrimental to all Queenslanders including victims of crimes.

Currently the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee has two bills to scrutinise—we have just got another—and, additionally, is conducting a review of the support for victims of crime which encompasses analysing the Victims of Crimes Assistance Act and the victim support operations of Queensland police, the DPP and court services. This is an enormous body of work, and that we have not been able to secure a longer time frame than eight weeks is not acceptable for victims, their families or any Queenslander. It also makes a mockery of what reviews and inquiries are supposed to achieve for our communities: to fix what is flawed and to do so in a transparent, respectful and efficient manner.

Given the ongoing trauma from crime in our electorates—just last night I spoke of the alleged torture of a young girl in my community—we owe more to victims than eight weeks. Having sought unsuccessfully this week for leave for the member for Scenic Rim to move a general notice of motion to extend this time frame and having written a letter to the CLA, the reality is that, should a considerable extension not be granted, we are failing Queenslanders. That goes for every single person in this chamber, including those who voted against the member for Scenic Rim—

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I think some of the member for Noosa's comments may be straying into anticipation of debate. I know that the member's time is almost over, but I want the chair to rule about the anticipation of debate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): I will just get some advice. Member for Noosa, you are anticipating debate. You have some time left. I ask that you move on to something else.

Ms BOLTON: This is not good enough and that is why it is more important than ever to make the essential tweaks to our committee system now, not in four years time.