




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

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.19 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the Victims of Crime Assistance and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Firstly, I highlight the fact that we support the victims of crime getting this assistance and this help. However, it is really disappointing that there are tens of thousands more victims under this government than previously, so there are many more people being affected by crime than Queensland used to see.

A government member interjected.

Mr WATTS: It is easy to say that there are more people in Queensland, but the population in my community has grown only by a little bit but the amount of crime has grown extraordinarily.

Before I get into other elements of the bill, I refer to the DNA issue and the commission of inquiry. We absolutely need a commission of inquiry. One of the most confronting things that has happened to me as a member of parliament is to have a victim of rape sit down in front of you and explain their set of circumstances, all of the various testing and statement taking and the process they have had to go through only to be told that there was no DNA found and then to find out that, as we escalated that and spoke to other experts, in fact there was DNA available and there was an ability to chase down the perpetrators of this heinous crime that would have been missed because of the maladministration of this government for the last nine years of that particular department. A commission of inquiry is fundamental to bring justice to the thousands of victims who have samples sitting there that need to be tested and that need to be put through the system. We need to get the people who committed these crimes whose DNA is sitting there out of our community. They need to be put through the justice system so they do not create more victims. I definitely think that we need a commission of inquiry on DNA.

Let me get to the main part of the bill, and there are a couple of things that I really want to talk about. Some victims that I talk to are really struggling with the timeliness of when support comes, particularly around mental health support. I had an elderly gentleman stop me the other day; he is in his 70s. After his daughter witnessed an attack on him and a car theft, she is really suffering and needs support, and to be told that that support is months away is just not good enough. The perpetrators of a crime can get a lawyer pretty quickly on the state's purse. We need to ensure that victims in Queensland—the tens of thousands of more victims that have been caused by this government's incompetence and inability to stop the crime crisis—get the timely support that they need.

In terms of the dollars, of course it needs to be increased. We see inflation running out of control under a federal and a state Labor government, so therefore the amounts that have been allocated previously are just not enough. We have more victims and we have inflation going up, so of course this needed to be addressed and I support the addressing of that. However, in terms of the crime crisis, there are other victims out there who are somewhat unseen. If you are a small and family business owner and you are having crimes committed against your business, this is costing you money. This is

a difficult thing to put up with. Not only do you have the trauma of someone putting a machete in your face and taking your hard-earned cash, but you then have to front up tomorrow and try to run the business again.

It is the same for car theft in particular. Toowoomba is a great service community to many people who live west of it. People come into town to do their shopping, and they might do it for a school semester if their kids are at boarding school or whatever. With the properties around Toowoomba there has been an awful lot of theft going on on farms, but when people have their vehicles stolen this has a major effect on their ability to shop, their ability to go to work, their ability to take the kids to school, their ability to function in a part of the state where public transport is, at best, well below the average that people in the south-east corner would see. There are not really many options for people in my community.

When people are a victim of crime, I think it is very important that they get access to compensation, and I will talk about DV because it is very important. We have seen the destruction in our community and what it will do to families and extended families and how it affects a community. Those impacts are very real, so for a victim to be able to access compensation of whatever quantum is a start to try and help repair some of the trauma and damage that they have gone through.

For me when I look at this bill the real tragedy is that we have more victims than we should have. If our justice system was working correctly, if we had not played around with the various aspects that were in place that related to making sure perpetrators could not get out and go on the merry-go-round that we have seen and if we had the correct type of rehabilitation and early intervention in place, we would be seeing victim numbers go down. Sadly, from a budgetary point of view and from a real human cost we are seeing the numbers increase by tens of thousands and we are then seeing the dollars increase by millions.

A government member interjected.

Mr WATTS: Yes, that is right: tens of thousands. I will go to the stats, because there are those opposite who do not believe me. The 2021-22 crime report published by the Queensland Government Statisticians Office said there were 64,540 victims of offences against the person recorded by the Queensland Police Service, noting a 49.2 per cent increase in total recorded victims. The number reported in 2020-21 was 43,260. For the member who was doubting the tens of thousands, if you take 43,260 victims away from 64,540, you will see that there are tens of thousands more victims at—

Mr Power interjected.

Mr WATTS: These were not victims? Because they happened in the past, apparently they were not victims of crime.

Mr Power: No, that's not true. You're misleading the House.

Mr WATTS: Then there is a process if I am misleading the House and you should follow it rather than sit here and interrupt someone—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Member, direct your comments through the chair.

Mr WATTS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I apologise. I am trying to bring a voice to the victims of crime. When the victims of crime wanted to talk to the Premier, there was going to be a big seminar held in Toowoomba. They were going to hire the Empire Theatre and have people come and put questions to the Premier. Unfortunately, the Premier did not want to listen to the victims of Toowoomba. There was something in the diary. I do not know whether it was a red carpet or a theatre opening or a movie or whatever it was, but what I do know is that the victims in Toowoomba did not have their voices heard by this Premier. She did not come up to Toowoomba and talk to them, so the victims of Toowoomba were ignored.

We were made promises in that meeting and we were told why things could not happen, and then even the ministers who did come up found themselves being corrected just a couple of days later with a policy and a direction change, because all of a sudden—I do not know—maybe it was the government's taxpayer funded polling that indicated that maybe it would be a good idea to listen to the victims of crime. We have been listening to the victims of crime and what they have told us is that they are planning to show Labor the door in 2024.