




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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## **VICTIMS' COMMISSIONER AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE REVIEW BOARD BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.35 pm): I rise to address the debate on the Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board Bill 2024. On 6 March 2024 the then Acting Attorney-General and Minister for Justice introduced this legislation into the Queensland parliament where it was subsequently referred to the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee for detailed consideration. As outlined by the then Acting Attorney-General, the two overarching objectives of this legislation are to, firstly, establish the Victims' Commissioner and Office of the Victims' Commissioner to promote and protect victims' rights and, secondly, establish the Sexual Violence Review Board to identify and review systemic issues in relation to the reporting, investigation and prosecution of sexual offences.

I note that the majority of the amendments that are proposed within this legislation seek to implement recommendations which have been outlined in a number of important reports: the *Hear her voice—report 2: Women and girls' experiences across the criminal justice system*, a report of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce; the report entitled *A call for change: commission of inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence*; and the report from the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee, report No. 48, *Inquiry into support provided to victims of crime*.

Victims of crime often face a myriad of challenges in the aftermath of a criminal act. Often the impacts of such acts extend far beyond the immediate incident itself. Whether it is an assault, theft, harassment or any other crime, victim-survivors often grapple with a complex array of physical, emotional and practical difficulties. These challenges can be both immediate and enduring, profoundly affecting the wellbeing and security of those affected. Significant research into crime victimisation has shown how the aftermath of a crime can inflict profound emotional trauma on victims, whether through shock, fear, anger or even sadness. Such trauma can often lead to further anxiety, depression and even the development of post-traumatic stress disorders.

For too many Queenslanders, we have also seen how the psychological effects for victims of crime can linger for far longer, even well beyond when physical wounds have healed. Such traumatic and psychological impacts can also have devastating consequences far beyond the individual, with impacts on personal relationships, work and even financial strains all contributing to the exacerbation of what is already a traumatic experience impacting those relationships, work and overall quality of life parameters. For victim-survivors, navigating this emotional turmoil can be overwhelming, requiring access to appropriate mental health support and counselling services.

In light of these many challenges, the role of a formal Victims' Commissioner therefore becomes paramount. A Victims' Commissioner should and can serve as a dedicated advocate for the rights and needs of victim-survivors, working to ensure their voices are heard and their concerns addressed. By providing a centralised point of contact within the criminal justice system, a Victims' Commissioner can and must work to empower victim-survivors and fundamentally promote the rights of victims.

The harsh reality is that, for too long under Labor's youth crime crisis, Queensland victims of crime have felt abandoned and not heard by this current state Labor government. The Liberal National Party has listened to countless Queenslanders in our own electorates and across the state who have shared with us their devastating personal experience with crime and their feelings of being abandoned by a state Labor government which cares more about the rights of perpetrators than the rights of victims.

The latest official statistics paint a damning picture of the enormity of Labor's crime crisis and the trauma that is being inflicted on Queensland victims. As the annual crime report which was recently released by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office revealed, Queensland victim numbers have skyrocketed 165 per cent under the state Labor government to a 10-year high. The annual crime report also revealed that victim numbers are up almost 18 per cent in the last year alone, that the crime rate rose over 11 per cent last year, that juvenile offender numbers have increased over five per cent to 11,000, and that more Queensland crime is now going unsolved. Further, we also know that break-ins have increased 20 per cent and stolen cars have increased by 16 per cent in 12 months per 100,000 Queenslanders, with 55 per cent of all break-ins and 55 per cent of stolen cars now committed by juvenile offenders.

These are not simply statistics and numbers in a report; these are real Queenslanders. These are mums and dads who have woken up to find their cars stolen, these are businesses that have had to close their doors after another break-in, and these are communities which have had to live in fear whilst youth criminals continue to run rampant at night.

As the state member for Moggill, local residents continue to reach out to me, sharing the devastating impacts and trauma that they have had to endure, either as victims themselves or on behalf of their loved ones who have become the latest victim of a crime. I have had an elderly couple share with me the devastating financial and emotional toll they suffered after enduring two home robberies in the space of two months. I have spoken with businesses in Chapel Hill and Kenmore that in the space of one night were all targeted with their doors and windows broken in multiple attempted robberies, with small business owners having to count the costs of not only repairs but also lost clientele and higher insurance costs as a consequence.

Recently, I had a Brookfield resident share with me how, in the space of 12 months, her family were victims of separate acts of crime with two cars stolen. As the father told me, his wife and young son were left traumatised after accidentally confronting the two masked men in their garage as their car was stolen. These honest Queenslanders are all real victims of crime and victims of Labor's crime crisis. They are not part of a media beat-up, as some Labor government members have suggested.

The fact is Labor simply cannot be trusted to fix the crime crisis, to make our community safer or to ensure the rights of victims of crime are put first; nor can the Greens political party ever be trusted on the issue of crime and support for victims, given that it is the Greens political party whose various members, candidates and elected representatives have supported calls to defund the police. It is only the Liberal National Party which is committed to making our communities safer and strengthening the rights for Queensland victims of crime.

That is why the Liberal National Party has already announced three significant changes to bolster the rights of crime victims through our Making Queensland Safer Laws. In contrast to the years of inaction and too little, too late changes by the Labor state government, should the Liberal National Party be successful at the October 2024 state election we will take strong action to strengthen the rights of victims of crime by rewriting the sentencing principles and the charter of youth justice principles of the Youth Justice Act to make victims' rights paramount and ensure the full impact of youth crime on victims can be considered by the court and move victims' rights up to the Youth Justice Act. We will also lift the veil of secrecy by providing victims updates relating to their case with automatic updates.

**Mrs D'ATH:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I ask the member be brought back to the long title of the bill. We are not debating what the LNP may or may not do; we are debating the bill before the House.

**Dr ROWAN:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order. I am responding to the member for Bulimba, who specifically in her speech was referencing how we would respond, and I am also referencing victims of crime.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui):** I will take some advice. There is no point of order, but, member, I remind you to stay within the long title of the bill.

**Dr ROWAN:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Currently, victims of crime must apply to receive updates regarding the justice process for youth offenders, and this can be an overwhelming process. The LNP will remove the burden from victims and make it as easy as possible to receive updates, which is why we will shift the onus from the opt-in to opt-out.

Finally, the LNP will also amend the Childrens Court Act to remove the provision excluding victims and their families from the Childrens Court on the basis of prejudice to offenders. Victims and their families are often blocked from court proceedings involving offenders, so the LNP will remove this provision to allow victims and their families to always attend court. That is why the LNP believes in listening to the voices of victims and responding as appropriate.

I wish to stress how victims of crime deserve to be a priority, not an afterthought. Whilst the legislated introduction of a Victims' Commissioner and Sexual Violence Review Board is welcome, it has not been without controversy or genuine critique from those within the legal, domestic and sexual violence and other key sectors. The state Labor government must listen to these stakeholders and listen to Queensland victims and ensure such concerns are sufficiently addressed.

I wish to thank all stakeholders and victim-survivors who contributed to this committee's examination of this legislation, as well as all committee members from both sides of the House, including the Liberal National Party's deputy chair, the member for Theodore, as well as the member for Scenic Rim.

There is certainly a lot more that needs to be done here in Queensland with respect to listening to the victims of crime. There certainly needs to be more with respect to key legislative reforms, particularly when you are putting funding into recidivist and prevention programs. When you are pouring more money into those programs and getting fewer outcomes, the question needs to be asked why. There is a whole lot more work that needs to be done here in Queensland despite this legislation. This legislation is certainly welcomed and hopefully it will go some way to addressing many of the issues that are here in Queensland with respect to not only youth crime but also crime overall.

Given what we are also seeing with respect to those victims of crime and their families, their voices need to be heard. They feel their voices are not being heard. When I travel across my electorate of Moggill and right across Queensland, Queenslanders are saying that this government is failing on crime, it is failing victims and it needs to do a lot more. They are very concerned about this issue. They are very concerned about community safety. Really, over the last nine years this government has given up on community safety. They have not been listening to the victims of crime. Hopefully things will change in October when we can show Labor the door.