




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2024

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT, MOTION TO TAKE NOTE

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.40 pm): I rise to speak to the former Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's report into support provided to victims of crime—an issue that I have spoken about on many occasions in this chamber. I gave an undertaking at numerous crime rallies across this state and at numerous meetings with victims of crime in this state that I would be their voice in Queensland parliament, because for too long now they have felt that their voice has not been heard. It was interesting listening to the previous speaker mention all of those recommendations moving forward. I certainly hope that we are going to see some action regarding those recommendations and not simply rhetoric and false promises. Victims are looking for real change. They are looking for real support. There is no question about that.

It is just under one year since this House agreed to a motion that the committee inquire into support provided to victims of crime. Just 64 days later, the committee's report was tabled. As the Queensland Police Service's annual report 2022-23 clearly states, in that year we saw an almost 19 per cent increase in the rate of offences against the person and a 16 per cent increase in the rate of property offences. Queenslanders expect the government to put victims first and to ensure victims are supported. Despite the lip-service given to victims of crime up until this point, the fact is that this government set a time frame that was astonishingly inadequate and inappropriate for an issue that is so important to Queenslanders.

This government talks a big game when it comes to domestic violence—we have heard that over the last 24 hours—but submissions to this inquiry show yet again the truth of this government's hollow words. DVConnect in their submission said that the 'structure of this inquiry does not facilitate' engagement with victims. The chief executive officer of the Domestic Violence Action Centre in their submission said 'with the notice period it was very difficult for us to mobilise, even as an agency employing staff'. That should be ringing alarm bells.

It is not only the groups representing victims that found fault with the time frame set by this government. Key government departments such as the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and even the Queensland Police Service struggled to provide meaningful responses or address the issues raised by victims. That says it all. If this government's own departments and representative groups struggle to comply with this government's time frames, what chance did victims of crime have to have their say?

It is not surprising, given this government's time frames, that many of the recommendations are based on previous government inquiries. Let me be very clear that this inquiry was an opportunity to make meaningful change for Queenslanders in their time of need. I repeat my earlier statement: I certainly hope that the recommendations contained in this report are acted upon and that we do see meaningful change, because victims of crime in this state have waited too long to be recognised and to be supported.

This inquiry again highlighted the current resourcing of the Queensland Police Service. At the estimates hearing on 14 December 2020 we were told that, as part of this government's election commitment, sworn police officers would increase by 340 during the 2022-23 financial year. Instead, we saw a reduction of over 200 in that year. Since then, we have also seen the failure of the international recruitment drive.

Like several of my colleagues on this side of the House, I have responded to crimes, I have taken statements from victims, I have seen the distress in their eyes, and I continue to be contacted by victims of crime across this state. It has a horrendous impact on some of those people and their families. The violation of privacy when their homes are invaded and the trauma associated with being assaulted—they have to live with that for the rest of their life. We need to be cognisant of that.

Several of the recommendations of this inquiry refer to specific actions to be undertaken by the QPS. I know that the vast majority of police officers want to hold people to account when they commit a crime. I know that the vast majority of police officers want to support victims of crime to the best of their ability.

I want to acknowledge the Queenslanders who gave evidence and made submissions to this inquiry. I also want to acknowledge and thank the groups that support victims of crime.