




Speech By
Jimmy Sullivan

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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FORENSIC SCIENCE QUEENSLAND BILL

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (12.03 pm): I rise to support the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. I start by saying that it is disappointing but not surprising that some opposite choose to try to politicise this issue when this bill is a genuine attempt to be effective and provide trust in our important forensic science work. This bill implements recommendation 121, which is that the Queensland government pass legislation that creates a forensic science institute. The legislation creates: the position of a director; an office within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, similar to that of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which is independent but still within government; senior staff of the office; a research and development unit within the office; and a non-executive advisory board with specific members. It also recommended provisions to protect and promote independent and expert forensic services to the criminal justice system. We know that this is important, not just for the protection of victims but to make sure we get it right when it comes to those who are incarcerated. Every incarcerated person who is wrongly convicted means a perpetrator gets away, and that is another cruel element for victims themselves.

The bill establishes: the Director of Forensic Science Queensland; an office called Forensic Science Queensland that will be administratively placed within the justice portfolio once the bill is passed; and an advisory council. The bill includes various clauses promoting the independence and integrity of this framework, such as by emphasising these features in the purpose of the bill and the director's functions. It sets out clearly how that structure is to work. The bill also includes the eligibility criteria for the appointed persons. The bill enshrines in legislation a requirement for forensic science services to be high quality, reliable, independent and impartial, playing their own crucial role in the criminal justice system. It establishes key elements of Queensland's new forensic service delivery model to ensure this requirement is met.

The bill establishes the position of director, who will be responsible and accountable for forensic service delivery. The bill has clear requirements for the high-quality standard needed in the director's appointment and conduct. The advisory council also contributes to public confidence in Forensic Science Queensland by providing a mechanism for independent review of policies and procedures. Confidence in the process is important to encourage victims to come forward, for police to investigate independently and for prosecutors to run cases appropriately. We need that confidence in the system and I think this bill goes a long way to deliver that.

Some of these policies and procedures will relate to rectifying issues identified by the commission of inquiry. I want to thank those commissioners, particularly Walter Sofronoff for his extensive work. The variety of members on the advisory council with experience in different aspects of the criminal justice system will assist to ensure that the ultimate purpose is the administration of criminal justice where faith in the system is core. Again, it will allow people to come forward and be treated respectfully through investigations and the work of detectives and the police force, and then of course prosecution. This goes a long way to providing that faith and that core element in the system.

I want to thank the committee for their work. I want to thank the Attorney-General for her extensive work in this space. I look forward to continuing to work with her, assuming the bill is passed, in establishing and implementing this important reform. As I said, this will provide a strong structure for restoring faith in this important element of the criminal justice system. I commend the bill to the House.