




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR COOPER

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LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (2.36 pm): One would think that in an election year those opposite would use every opportunity to speak about their track record and their plans to better support victims of crime. There is a reason they are not speaking about that: their track record demonstrates a complete and utter hollowing out of the victim sector when they were in power. They cut DV shelters, cut funding to Bravehearts, cut funding to the Domestic Violence Advocacy Centre, cut the Special Circumstances Court and cut the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council. I have pages of those in front of me. I do not have enough time to talk about that. Equally, they do not have a plan to support victims of crime. I have looked through their document that outlines their priorities and there is just one sentence that speaks about victims of crime. What an insult it is to victims that those opposite are happy to politicise and to punctuate the issue of crime but cannot devote more than one sentence to it in a policy document.

It is disappointing to hear the member for Currumbin criticising our recommendation to establish a victim advocacy service. I stand by that recommendation. I think it is a great recommendation. I am proud that it is there. In fact, there is a greater word count in the paragraph on that recommendation than there is in the LNP's entire policy document. I have also heard the criticism that there have been too many reviews into victims' issues. While I do acknowledge that that has an impact on stakeholders, I do not think it is a bad thing to be circling back and to be asking victims about their experiences and what more we can do to better support victims, because those experiences and their needs are dynamic. As we know more, we expect more, and governments can achieve more—and that ought to be embraced fully.

At the time, this committee inquiry was held against a backdrop of reform—most notably the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce which took a deep dive into women's experiences of justice, hearing from hundreds of victims and making over 200 recommendations. It is important to draw out that there have been, even in my time here in parliament, a number of reviews looking into the issues of victims of crime. Over 1,000 submitters have actually collectively contributed to that and formed a total voice of victims in Queensland. Many of the recommendations of that review related solely to victims of domestic and family violence.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition say yesterday that the number of victims in Queensland has increased. What also needs to be clarified is that the most extraordinary increase in reported crime is in fact in terms of survivors of domestic and family violence and sexual violence now actually coming forward to report to police. It is clear that the ongoing commitment to women's safety has resulted in more survivors feeling encouraged to report and that this investment in multiple inquiries such as this parliamentary inquiry or the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce have really been worthwhile.

The report acknowledged that many of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recommendations such as establishing a Victims' Commissioner will improve victim services generally. That is now underway. We have the Interim Victims' Commissioner in place, and Jon Rouse is doing a

fantastic job. We are piloting a victim advocacy service. We are expanding the scope of victims' rights and looking at whether they should be embedded in the Human Rights Act. We are developing a long-term and sustainable plan for adult restorative justice and looking at youth justice conferencing so that it can be more victim-centric. We are improving the way that forensic services are delivered in Queensland.

We also made additional recommendations such as having a serious review into the financial assistance scheme. We did hear that it is not operating in a way that was originally intended and that unfortunately demand has blown that out. That review is underway. We have already seen an increase in financial assistance being made by this government. I do believe that that scheme will continue to improve.

The report also recommended that we have expanded powers and functions in the Charter of Victims' Rights, looking at whether we can include victims of property crime. We have heard from victims of property crime that they need more of a voice. Another recommendation was that a consistent, trauma informed professional development framework is rolled out. It is so important that anybody who is interacting with victims of crime is doing so in a trauma responsive way. The trauma that can be caused to victims through those interactions is very real.

Lastly, the report recommended greater coordination of service delivery between government agencies and between government agencies and non-government agencies to make sure that process for victims is being managed in a way that is reducing the risk of retraumatisation. All of those recommendations mean something. They will absolutely deliver a better victims landscape for victims of crime here in Queensland.

I have been really proud to be part of this inquiry. I thank the secretariat for all of their support. To all of the victims who lent their voices to this and other inquiries, thank you for your contributions and generosity.