




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR COOPER

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**POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL; CORRECTIVE SERVICES (PROMOTING SAFETY) AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (12.42 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the cognate debate. I want to pick up on some of the comments that have been made already by those opposite. I find it so amazing when they come in here and suggest that they are an ally to victim services. I find those types of statements so farcical. I remind the House that I have not forgotten, victim services have not forgotten and victims have not forgotten the way they were treated when the LNP were in power. The LNP when in power actually closed DV shelters. They cut the funding to victim support groups. They not only cut it; they wove into the funding arrangements the removal of any type of systemic advocacy, basically gagging victims agencies from speaking up and advocating to government. They have not forgotten that. They cut QSAC without warning, getting rid of such an important oversight body that had victims of crime represented, and cut funding to Victim Assist Queensland. To suggest that people have forgotten that or that the LNP is an ally to victim services is absolutely extraordinary.

To suggest that there is a lack of victims' voices completely dismisses the many victims who have worked with this Labor government to produce amazing outcomes for victims of crime. I appreciate that the minister has already spoken about Brett Thompson, the CEO of the Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group, who I am confident will not be pleased to have heard the way he was spoken about in this House. I will also talk about Sherrie Meyer, who was appointed last week to QSAC as a victim of crime. I have known Sherrie for 20 years. She has been supporting homicide victims in this state, working productively with the government, since the homicide of her son in 1993. To suggest that those victims have not had a role in giving a voice is absolutely ludicrous. I just need to make that statement on behalf of victims.

There are a lot of good things in this bill. I will touch on just a couple of them in the time I have available to me. I want to focus on the clauses that amend Queensland's victims register. The victims register is a unit that is embedded within Queensland Corrective Services. It was established almost 30 years ago—under a Labor government—and has provided a really important connection for QCS, for thousands of victims and for loved ones. The register and the parole process are the final connections between victims and the justice system. I remind members that for victims the impact of crime is long felt and that their need to stay involved in the justice process lasts all the way through to parole and beyond.

As members know, I have a long history supporting victims of homicide. Here in Queensland we have mandatory life sentencing for murder, with a non-parole period of between 15 and 20 years. There is a long time that victims are interacting in the criminal justice system, and the register continues to keep victims up to date throughout that period, letting them know about important parole application information and supporting them to respond to that. It is a really important service and a service that I continue to hear positive things about. Of course, there are always opportunities to do better. We have

heard that the process can retraumatise and that it can be clunky for victims to register. The bill proposes to sort this out by streamlining the registration process for the victims register. While retaining the existing registration process it adds additional pathways, with the aim to reduce retraumatisation.

Amendments will enable other entities such as victim support services to refer individuals to the register so they will not be required to complete another form. They will allow approval of registration of an individual without an application in circumstances where they already have a lot of the detail and the consent of the victim. They will provide discretion to reinstate an eligible person's registration without an application.

The bill proposes to extend the eligibility criteria for registration, allow victims of homicide to re-register, and recognise and allow for First Nations family and kinship arrangements. I know that this will be a great change. Finally, the bill proposes to increase the flexibility of how victims can engage with the victims register. For many years I have heard from victims who have not been able to provide a submission in written form, so having the ability to provide a submission in other forms is vital.

These reforms have the support of victims agencies, which have impressed on us through the committee process the importance of identifying and reforming those intersections in the justice system that retraumatise victims. Like I said, there is a lot of reform in these proposed bills. I would like to recognise all of the victims agencies that worked constructively with many government departments and ministers to bring about real, lasting and positive change for victims of crime. I commend the bills to the House.