




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2024

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (2.21 pm): This inquiry was established to assess the support provided to victims of crime. It was formed because of the crime crisis currently ripping through Queensland, because of the lack of support provided to victims of crime and because of the rising tide of anguish in our communities following multiple deaths allegedly at the hands of young offenders. Statistics provided by the department show that in 2022 the QPS recorded there were 64,000 victims of offences against the person, which is an almost 50 per cent increase on the year before. The committee heard that that represents only part of the issue. When we turn to property crime, the number of victims becomes staggering. In the reported year alone, 200,000 Queenslanders had their cars stolen, had their homes broken into or were robbed, which is a 25 per cent increase on the year before.

The committee report also notes that a number of submitters raised concerns about Victim Assist Queensland being able to manage the increased demand in processing applications. The committee heard that Victim Assist Queensland has seen a 195 per cent increase in applications from victims of crime for financial assistance. There is no denying it: crime has gone up and Queenslanders feel less safe. How we got to this point must be acknowledged. We got to this point because nine years ago the Miles government, under Annastacia Palaszczuk, decided to water down our laws and they created a generation of untouchables. They created a generation of young offenders who believe their rights are above the rights of victims and they are terrorising communities.

Victims demand more than lip-service and platitudes. They need and they deserve their voices to be at the heart of the justice system, but under Labor their rights are put last. The rights of perpetrators are put before victims under this Labor government. One submitter wrote to the committee saying—

Oh! Please excuse my surprise to note that there is a Victims Charter of Rights. And forgive my sarcasm, as it often seems, the only people who have rights, are those committing the crimes.

Russell Field wrote to the committee, stating—

Neither my wife or myself have worked since the deaths of our son, partner and unborn child on Australia Day, 2021. We have had limited counselling, and still struggle everyday, more than 2 years after the event ... It appears more support is available for the perpetrators than what is available for victims. THIS NEEDS TO CHANGE

This is not new information. For years recommendations have been on the table to address this issue. In fact, on 1 July 2022 the Women's Justice and Safety Taskforce recommended that the government develop, fund and implement a statewide model for the delivery of a professional victim advocate service to provide individualised, culturally safe and trauma informed support to victims to help them navigate the services and the criminal justice system. Twenty months on we have the same recommendation in this committee report, yet still no action from the Miles Labor government. Four of the recommendations in this committee report are actually recommendations that have already been made by previous inquiries or reports and a further 10 recommendations in this report are for yet another inquiry or review.

Victims of crime want action now. They are sick of this state Labor government taking no action and giving them platitudes. In the past nine years this government has had every opportunity to act, but time after time it has failed victims of crime. This government consistently puts offenders before victims of crime. It consistently puts the rights of young offenders who are terrorising our communities before victims in this state, and victims' voices are consistently pushed down by this state Labor government.

Nothing is going to change in this state until we change the government. This is a government that says youth crime is just a media beat-up. This is a government that denies the victim access to the Childrens Court when the person who has committed a crime against them is being heard. This is a government that has had the chance to open the Childrens Court to victims and victims' families, but it has failed to do it. It has failed to act at every opportunity. Now we have this committee report that recommends further inquiries and further reviews and makes recommendations that have been on the table for years. This is a state Labor government in chaos and crisis. Nothing will change until we change the government.

(Time expired)