




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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VICTIMS' COMMISSIONER AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE REVIEW BOARD BILL

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (11.57 am): Twenty-six thousand: that is how many reported victims of crime there were in 2015 when those opposite first came to power. Under this Labor government, in which Premier Miles has been a key decision-maker for almost 10 years now, the number of victims of crime has grown year on year from 26,000 when they first came to power to an all-time 10-year high this year. Staggeringly, the figure is sitting at 81,000 victims of crime. That lies squarely at the feet of this third-term Labor government. Even this morning in this chamber, during ministerial statements, we heard the Premier try to convince Queenslanders that crime rates are going down, but Queenslanders know better. The staggering number of victims of crime know better—81,000 people.

Before the state Labor government came to power, before 2015, there were 18,000 victims of crime. Last year, there were 58,000. That is a 219 per cent increase. Before the state Labor government came to power 10 years ago, there were 4,500 victims of rape and sexual assault. Last year, there were 9,000. That is a 105 per cent increase.

This bill is a missed opportunity to listen to Voice for Victims who have marched on parliament to call for change. It is a missed opportunity to listen to what victims of crime are calling for. Any member of this parliament only had to step outside to talk with victims of crime who have marched on parliament to have their voices heard. I thank every single one of those victims outside who came this morning to call on this House to take this action. I thank in particular Graham Kimball, who is standing outside right now with his family. Two years ago he was a family of four. His son was killed in a car crash with an unregistered 17-year-old driver. He said he wants the Premier and his government to know that youth crime is not a media beat-up. He addressed the crowd, saying he is sick and tired of the government treating this crisis like a political football. People are dying. He said it took nine months for them to be connected to support.

I thank Russell Field, who is again bravely standing out there telling his story. Russell Field wants this government to know that youth crime is not a media beat-up. He said, 'Our son, his fiancée and their unborn child were killed by a juvenile out on bail, and where is the justice?' There are many victims and he is saying to the Premier, 'We did not ask to be a victim, but we are just one. We need someone to care, yet victims get nothing.' Cindy is here as part of Vyleen's family. She called on the government to start listening. She said Voice for Victims has been a great support to her. She said, 'We do not want this to happen to anyone ever again, but voices are being ignored and not heard and we need victims to be heard.'

The Robertson family, whose trauma is still fresh but who marched on parliament today to call for change while they are still struggling with their own grief and their own loss, said, 'We have not heard from the government for any assistance. We were not enough for premier Palaszczuk and we need the system fixed now.' Susan Marcus said she has been left devastated. She cannot work. She cannot

sleep. She said, 'My life has been changed forever and my heart ripped out of my chest.' To everyone else this morning who marched so that the voices of victims could be heard, I thank you. Thank you for reaching out to the LNP. We are listening to you and we will act. We will ensure that detention as a last resort is removed from the Youth Justice Act just like members of Voice for Victims are calling for.

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I ask the member be brought back to the bill. I respect the views of those outside and victims of crime, but now the member is talking about matters that are not in this bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): I have been listening closely to the member and I am finding that she is entirely relevant.

A government member interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Minister, are you reflecting on the chair? Member for Currumbin, you have the call.

Mrs GERBER: I say this to the Attorney-General, who just stood up on a point of order to say it is not relevant to listen to what victims outside right now are calling for—

Mrs D'ATH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock.

Mrs D'ATH: I take personal offence and the member should withdraw.

Mrs GERBER: I withdraw. Victims are calling for detention as a last resort to be removed from the bill. Since 2020 this state government has introduced a 10-point plan, a three-point plan, a four-point plan and today an 11-point plan but no plan to remove detention as a last resort. This bill introduces a Victims' Commissioner which the LNP supported from the very beginning—and in fact called for—so of course we will not oppose this bill, but we want to see the voices of victims of crime heard and acted upon, and this bill does not do that. This bill does not remove detention as a last resort like victims of crime are calling for. This bill deals with complaints about alleged contraventions of the Charter of Victims' Rights, publishing information in relation to the criminal justice system, promoting the victims' charter and rights of victims and advocating on behalf of victims by making recommendations to government, providing advice to the minister on issues affecting victims and monitoring the implementation of recommendations made by the Victims' Commissioner.

The Victims' Commissioner will also look into systemic issues. We know from listening to the voices of victims that there are many systemic issues, not just in the crime space but for victims of crime themselves. We know that victims of crime are not getting the financial support they need. They are having to wait 18 months to two years to get the financial assistance they need. For almost 10 years we have had the same state Labor government announcing the same plans—a 10-point plan, a three-point plan, a four-point plan and this morning an 11-point plan. Victims of crime are calling for tangible action and this government refuses to act.

The Victims' Commissioner will also conduct research into matters affecting victims, including particular cohorts of victims. That is the systemic aspect of the role of the Victims' Commissioner. Every day we are speaking to victims of crime. We know the horrors they are experiencing and we know it does not end when the crime ends. These people have gone through the most horrific crimes and they are telling us that the criminal justice system is detrimental to their experience. Victims of crime have been calling for an advocate service and I want to make the distinction that this Victims' Commissioner is not the same as the advocate service that was recommended as part of the victims of crime inquiry that the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee conducted last year.

Those opposite must do so much better. Whilst the Victims' Commissioner is a good step, so much more needs to be done to support victims of crime. Since 2014 over 400 people have tragically lost their lives to murder. That is almost one person every week. Some of their families and loved ones were here today marching on parliament calling for change—change this government is refusing to listen to and act on. The most recent crime report of the Government Statistician's Office reveals an all-time 10-year high when it comes to victim numbers across this state—an increase of 213 per cent. Assault is up 219 per cent. Rape and attempted rape is up 155 per cent. Armed robbery is up 221 per cent.

Today those opposite dismissed the desperate pleas of victims of crime to remove detention as a last resort from the Youth Justice Act. Labor's 10-point plan is simply another illustration of the chaos and crisis of this government. While Queenslanders are marching on parliament demanding action, this Labor government announces another 11-point plan. Only the LNP is listening to victims of crime. The LNP is committed to removing detention as a last resort, which is what victims of crime have called for.

Despite Premier Miles jetsetting around the state, he has closed his ears to victims of crime wanting real change. Queenslanders are calling for detention as a last resort to be removed from the Youth Justice Act. Our Making Queensland Safer Laws will do that. We will listen to victims of crime and we will take real action on what they are calling for.