




Speech By  
**Mark Boothman**

**MEMBER FOR THEODORE**

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### **FORENSIC SCIENCE QUEENSLAND BILL**

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (11.03 am): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Forensic Science Queensland Bill 2023. At the outset, I want to thank my fellow committee members, even though I joined the committee late in the process before the report. I also want to thank all of the individuals who participated by writing to the committee and expressing their opinions. We stand here today debating a piece of legislation due to the disastrous failures of this government with the handling of our forensic science labs. It has cast a dark shadow over the Queensland criminal justice system. One could ask: how many criminals—rapists, murderers—are walking free due to the systemic failures at a facility that we all place the highest levels of trust in? For many victims this trust has been shattered; their hope that justice has been served all but destroyed.

We are here today debating a bill that cleans up a mess caused by complete incompetence and lack of oversight, yet if it was not for the tireless and brave advocacy of Vicki Blackburn in her search for justice for her daughter Shandee and the efforts of Dr Wright, who sacrificed her career to call out the failures of DNA testing in Queensland, this bill would not exist and we would still be none the wiser about the systemic failures at the forensic science lab. Queenslanders need to be reminded that concerns were first raised in late 2021, around the same time that the *Shandee's Story* podcast first aired. This podcast highlighted failures at the lab in extracting basic DNA profiles. By May 2022 the LNP and many others were calling for a commission of inquiry to start the process to put an end to this miscarriage of justice. These cries were met with resistance from the minister, claiming that whistleblowers and the LNP were playing pure politics. The minister seemed to forget the people greatly affected by this colossal mismanagement—and they are the victims, and these people deserve justice. The commission of inquiry into the forensic DNA labs made 123 recommendations, and only now the minister has finally acted. The government will implement 121 recommendations as a priority.

As of 20 September, potentially 37,000 cases require retesting. That is 37,000 cases awaiting closure. To put this further into context, over 103,000 samples potentially need to be retested, and to all Queenslanders this is completely unacceptable.

The bill will establish the statutory position of Director of Forensic Science Queensland, a supporting Office of the Director of Forensic Science Queensland and the Forensic Science Queensland Advisory Council. It also transfers Forensic Science Queensland from Queensland Health to the department of justice, and this will be done by July 2024. Whilst these changes are welcome, a properly functioning forensic science lab is a critical part of our criminal justice system.

Due to the short time we have to debate this legislation, I have decided to cut my speech short to allow other members to talk on this very important bill that affects the core and critical cornerstone of our justice system. I will therefore keep my comments at that, but it is still appalling that we have come to this and we have had to bring in legislation to fix up a massive miscarriage of justice in this state.