




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2024

## LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (2.16 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee report No. 48, 57th Parliament, *Inquiry into support provided to victims of crime*, tabled on 19 May 2023.

This report presents a summary of the inquiry held by the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee. The committee's task was to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on the support provided to victims of crime and to identify if there are areas where improvements could be made. On that point I should note that there have been many improvements that have been made since this report on 19 May 2023.

Stakeholders, victim witnesses and advocates confirmed that we can do better in this space. Some problems could be quite easily fixed, while others require complex solutions that involve multiple agencies. It should not be forgotten that there have been several reports with recommendations that address many of the issues raised in this inquiry. There is the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce *Hear her voice—report 1: Addressing coercive control and domestic and family violence in Queensland; Hear her voice—report 2: volume 2: Women and girls' experiences across the criminal justice system*; and the Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence.

The appointment of a Victims' Commissioner will go a long way to addressing many issues raised by our courageous witnesses during the public hearings. The committee spared no effort in raising public awareness of this relevant and important inquiry. The committee had hearings in Brisbane, Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Logan, Ipswich and the Gold Coast. These places were chosen based on submissions received as well as people who expressed an interest in giving evidence to the committee. We advised 360 key stakeholders and over 1,000 organisations and members of the public of the inquiry's inception and invited them to make written submissions. The committee also contacted approximately 90 regional not-for-profit organisations inviting them to tell of their experiences as boots-on-the-ground service providers for the victims of crime.

We embraced social media and made a short Facebook video raising awareness of the inquiry and inviting submissions. Through the Parliamentary Service's media team we sent media releases to over 175 members of the press. While media were present at some of our hearings, we cannot control what or when they report. It is unfortunate that there was not more media reporting about the inquiry in the lead-up to our public hearings, especially when we had open forums for members of the public to come forward and have their voices heard regardless of whether they had previously made a written submission.

On behalf of the committee I thank those individuals and organisations who made written submissions, those who made themselves available and appeared at the public hearing and the regional members of parliament who attended and brought witnesses to the hearings. I thank you all for your contribution to our inquiry. I know the concerns that were raised about the time line of this inquiry. The key objective was to conclude the inquiry and make recommendations to government so that changes can be made alongside those made by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce and the independent commission of inquiry. To get an extension on our inquiry would have only prolonged the agony of victims of crime and delayed change.

The adversarial system of justice is not an easy system for victims of crime to navigate. I practised criminal defence law for close to 25 years. It is hard for victims to understand concepts such as the jury process or the fact that the prosecution represents the state and not the victim. It is harder still to understand when you are grieving, suffering or living with trauma as a victim of crime. This inquiry highlighted that every victim is different and every victim deals with catastrophe differently.

On 23 March 1982, the *Herbert River Express* reported on a funeral service for two victims who died in a traffic collision on Abergowrie Road. The victims were Geoffrey Robert Bonning, 23, and Joanne Mary Russo, 21. They were killed when their vehicle collided with a four-wheel drive vehicle. It was a small country town and a small country road. Joanne was my sister and our family dealt with that tragedy on our own. Mum was very religious and relied on faith to deal with her grief. Due to factors that are not relevant to this inquiry, the driver of the other vehicle was never charged. I raise this issue because often we do not know what burdens someone has faced in life, but those burdens can bring us together to help those whose lives have been marred by tragedy. For that reason, this inquiry should be beyond politics. I commend the report to the House.