




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2024

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (2.51 pm): I rise to speak on my previous committee's inquiry into this bill, which included hearings across the state. Many recounted in person or via submissions their trauma from experiencing crime and the lack of emotional, financial and physical support provided. As we found, sadly these failings had been known for many years. For example, restorative justice was not consistently rolled out and is inappropriately applied. When it is, it can be catastrophically delayed. Our current select committee's inquiry into youth justice reform is hearing exactly the same things from submitters and witnesses. In addition, the monetary compensation scheme under the Victims of Crime Act is complex, difficult to navigate and not timely. Requiring victims to prove their victim status is retraumatising. Since the inquiry, the act has been amended to increase the amount of compensation available to victims, but we need to expand the criteria to include car theft, for example.

A system of support that works extremely well is the Victims' Homicide Support Group. We heard constant praise for this organisation and its volunteers. Why this has not been replicated for other victims is a question I have not found an answer to. A similar mystery is the 2017 establishment of the victims of crime One-Stop Shop Strategy and Implementation Office, OSSIO. As we have found, it has delivered nothing. That the Department of Justice and Attorney-General formed this office meant there was a need at that time, so I find it incredible that five years on there has been no progress. This has led to constant submissions from witnesses during the inquiry of the need for a one-stop shop. If the committee had been given the time we could have investigated this failing, determined why it occurred and come up with recommendations to prevent this in the future. As a result of this and many examples found in other departments, I have requested a full, independent review into the capabilities of the Public Service which needs to be undertaken in an effort to diminish these occurrences.

A key message that came through during our inquiry was that the whole justice system is still focused on perpetrators and treats victims as an afterthought. As one witness said, 'When someone seeks a remedy for crime through the justice system, often it is described as having one's day in court. But of course it is never the victim's day: it is the offender's day.' Overall, support systems for victims are disjointed and in need of serious reform. DVConnect stated—

An enduring theme across the life span of the criminal justice journey is the lack of proactive and easily accessible information for victims. There are repeated cases where victims have not been advised of relevant matters or having to engage in protracted follow up to find out information.

That was a familiar theme. As was found some seven years ago, we do need a one-stop shop for victim support and cultural change throughout the system; however, it is a positive that we now have an Interim Victims' Commissioner and we look forward to what emanates from that.

Frustratingly, the nine-week time constraint on the committee's inquiry resulted in no capacity to unpack many aspects. This led to recommendations for others to do what was tasked to our committee. For example, recommendation 2 was—

That the Queensland Government review the Charter of victims' rights ...

This is absurd, as we were asked by the government to review the victims' charter, not for it to be handballed back to the government. What is the point—or was that the point?

As I said in my statement of reservation, this inquiry has been one of 'monumental failings, shortfalls and shortcomings' and it is not acceptable. Regardless of a request to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly, which said it was not their responsibility, and another to the Leader of the House, who did not respond, and a motion without notice to debate, a tabled request for an extension of the time line was not supported by government MPs. All of this was deeply disturbing, especially as no reason was given. Why the rush? Nothing had been done in the previous six years after OSSIO was set up. An extra eight weeks to do the job right is the very least the government could have provided. This was fundamentally disrespectful to the victims and families who participated, as well as any future victims.

For this reason I oppose this report—not because it does not have some good recommendations, but because of everything it failed to do. I want to thank all who contributed to this inquiry. Victims: please be assured you have been heard.