




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2025

MOTION

Sexual Offences, Legislative Reform; Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (6.31 pm): I want to be really clear about what we are debating tonight. I want to be really clear about the arguments that have been put forward by the government tonight. Firstly I want to make it clear that I am rising to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Springwood, not the amendments put forward by the Attorney-General that have now been amended by the Speaker because it would seem that the Attorney-General could not quite get her amendments right.

Tonight we have seen from those opposite two arguments put forward about why we cannot urgently deliver much needed reform for victim-survivors. The first is that we took too long to implement these reforms. As a former attorney-general I am happy to take responsibility, because six months into my term as attorney-general I set up the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. They looked at how we could better deliver sentencing for victims of rape and sexual assault. They said this is something that QSAC should look at, so immediately that was then referred to the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council for 18 months. I am happy to put ego and politics aside and say, sure, we actually had two processes that took place and it did take time.

Their second argument put forward tonight is that there needs to be more consultation. The reason we took so long was our Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce had hundreds of women involved in it. Hundreds of victim-survivors came forward with courage and bravery. Then the Sentencing Advisory Council took 18 months to consult with and take submissions from stakeholders, carry out quantitative analyses of datasets, analysis of sentencing remark transcripts, case law analysis, cross-jurisdictional legal analysis, one-on-one interviews with victim-survivors, legal stakeholders and victim-survivor support organisations and commissioned a research project that gathered community views on sentencing. So I am sorry we took a few years to make sure that these bodies consulted with all of these organisations.

Their second argument is that this now needs consultation, it has to go to a committee and will not commence until November—months and months away. We know, because our shadow attorney-general put very clearly the statistics of women who experience rape and sexual assault every day in this state, there is not a day to lose. Which is it, Attorney-General? Do we need more consultation or did we take too long to consult with too many people?

It is none of those reasons. The reason they are not helping us declare their own bill urgent to deliver for victim-survivors is politics, pride and ego. Shame! Can we please just all agree these are important reforms and they are much needed and we want to all deliver for victim-survivors this week in the parliament. We are not insisting that our amendments get voted on. We are not insisting it is done our way. We have said we will support their bill to make it urgent so we can deliver for victim-survivors. They have still said no. I cannot understand why a government who absolutely was brought kicking and screaming to deliver these reforms because we stood up and said it is about time we get it done, would not just say, 'All right, Opposition, you're happy to support our bill. Let's get it done.'

This is too important for politics. It is too important for ego and pride and protecting the reputation of the Attorney-General because a report sat on her desk for six months. A number of victim-survivors have been calling for these changes for years. Now we have done the consultation, not just with them but with legal stakeholders, we have conducted research—131 cases in the District Court were reviewed in 12 months. When it comes to sentencing for rape, the Sentencing Advisory Council said it absolutely does not meet community expectations. So let us not just deliver for the victim-survivors tonight; let us deliver for Queenslanders and their expectations of what should happen when a so-called good bloke commits rape or sexual assault. Let us get this done this week. We have put politics aside and said we will support the government's motion. It is about time the Premier and the Attorney-General put politics aside and helped us get their own motion and bill through the parliament this week.

(Time expired)