



Strategic workplan

**Independent Ministerial |
Advisory Council**

Acknowledgements

The Independent Ministerial Advisory Council (IMAC) would like to begin by acknowledging the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Queensland and pay respect to Elders past and present.

Disadvantage, intergenerational trauma and racism influence the disproportionate victimisation and criminalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly for women and girls. We are of the belief there is “better justice together” if we commit to the principle that First Nations people know best about what they need, and we actively embed culture and ancient knowledges into broad social change

We would also like to extend our deepest gratitude to the diverse groups, including support services, advocates, government agencies and other stakeholders that guide our work.

In particular, members would like to acknowledge the specific contributions of:

- **Victim-survivors / victims of crime**
Your bravery and courage in navigating the challenges within the criminal justice system inspire us daily. We recognise and honour your strength and resilience throughout this journey.
- **Related victims of crime**
To the family, friends, and the broader community who are profoundly impacted by crime yet often remain unrecognised within the justice system. We see you and stand with you.
- **Our First Nations people**
You are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system. Your experiences and voices are essential to our work, and we are committed to amplifying them.
- **All professionals and service providers in the criminal justice system**
Your tireless efforts to improve the system, embracing evidence and innovation, are instrumental.

Finally, we extend our profound gratitude to our esteemed members for their unwavering dedication and invaluable contributions to reforming the criminal justice system and enhancing support for victims*. We especially recognise those members with lived experience, whose essential perspectives are vital to our efforts.

*In cases where the IMAC uses the term ‘victim(s)’, this encompasses victim-survivors, related victims, and victims of crime



Independent Ministerial Advisory Co-Chairs
John Robertson, Beck O'Connor

Foreword

The Independent Ministerial Advisory Council (IMAC) has been established at a time of significant and complex reform.

Victim-survivors, related victims, communities, and service providers are increasingly advocating for Queensland's criminal justice system to be more person-centred and trauma-informed. At the same time, demand on the system is at an all-time high, victim-survivor support services are operating at beyond capacity and community concern about crime and in particular youth crime is increasing.

The IMAC's role, as outlined in our Terms of Reference, is broad.

We are providing victims' perspectives on how the criminal justice system operates and the impacts of crime on communities. We are providing advice on many aspects of criminal justice system reform: this includes crime prevention, early intervention, rehabilitation, serious violent offending, and the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the system, prisons and detention centres. We are also advocating for the interests of victims in the administration of justice.

With such a broad scope and so many complex issues coming into play, our early work has focused on identifying the systemic issues our work needs to consider. We have outlined these in this strategic workplan. The journey of a victim cannot be separated from the broader context of how the criminal justice system currently operates in Queensland. It is within this broader context that we can identify gaps for improvement to positively impact victim experiences and satisfaction with the criminal justice system.

Victims have already identified some of these gaps. We know that the system often re-traumatises them and they feel their rights are not recognised by a system that focuses on offenders. We know that the impact of crime on victim-survivors does not end at sentencing, nor when an offender is released. For many victims, the impact is life-long, and supports and structures to provide wellbeing recovery, healing and safety for victims beyond the parole process their interactions with the criminal justice system are desperately needed.

Our group is large and diverse. Alongside victim-survivors and related victims, our members have significant experience in advocacy roles and working in the criminal justice system. We also benefit from the critical voices of First Nations members whose people are so disproportionately impacted by the system.

We hope to develop a number of ideas for reform to address the systemic issues we have raised in this strategic workplan where we believe there are gaps, or where the present solutions are insufficient. This may lead to us providing advice to government about diverting funding from programs that do not have an evidence base to new programs and ideas that do.

We may also suggest law changes that ultimately support our primary focus on victims. We will also consider our advice within the parameters of recommendations for reform already made in key reports including *Hear Her Voice 1 & 2*, and the *Queensland Productivity Commission inquiry into imprisonment and recidivism*.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our members for their commitment to date. Because of our diverse membership, we have had many robust discussions—always respectfully—that ultimately have led to the development of this strategy.

Meaningful reform requires a commitment to genuine collaboration, recognising that those with lived experience are essential leaders and equal partners in driving systemic change. Victims are experts in their own stories, deserving dignity, autonomy and should define safety for themselves.

We also proud to have created a safe space for our members who are victim-survivors and related victims to feel sufficiently comfortable to share their experience and expertise with the group. To those members, we are grateful for your contribution, courage, leadership, and your advocacy.

As members with diverse experience with the criminal justice system, we understand the sense of urgency for change. However, if we are to perform our role effectively, genuinely advocate for victims, and propose effective and long term, we must ensure we take the time to carefully formulate our advice, that it is based on evidence, and that we elevate the needs and support the empowerment of victims in every decision we make.



Co-Chairs
Beck O'Connor, John Roberston

About us

The Independent Ministerial Advisory Council (IMAC) has been established to elevate the voices and experiences of victims to provide advice about reforming Queensland's criminal justice system.

We consider evidence and the lived experiences of victims to advise government about how the criminal justice system is currently working, how it should be reformed, and how to improve victims' experiences in the system.

Government can refer specific topics to us for advice. We can also set our own priorities.

This strategic workplan outlines our priorities for 2024-25.

Who we are

Our membership includes:

- victim-survivors
- related victims
- representatives from the legal sector and peak advocacy bodies
- First Nations leaders
- academics
- expert practitioners

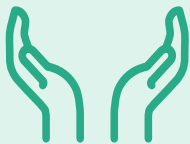
What will success look like

That our advice will support an increase in government and public sector literacy of victims' needs, leading to improved systems and services that reduce retraumatisation.

Furthermore, we aim to recognise victims as active participants in the justice system, reform priorities, and the development of supports that directly impact them and their lifelong safety.

Our guiding principles

When considering our work and providing advice we will adhere to the following principles:



Elevating the needs and supporting the empowerment of victims.



Maintaining focus on system design, strategic investment, continuity of care and meaningful reform.



Ensuring high quality evidence and lived experience is central to decision-making.



Addressing the needs and over-representation of First Nations and other priority groups.

Priority focus areas

We have identified three focus areas for our strategic workplan:



Focus area 1

Enhancing victim supports and experiences

Goals within this area:

- Prioritise victim empowerment, choice and autonomy
- Redress inequalities in current criminal justice system responses
- Enhance systems coordination to improve victim's experiences



Focus area 2

Crime prevention and early intervention

Goals within this area

- Address the underlying causes of crime and criminal behaviour
- Reduce harms to communities and victims
- Proactively addressing the cycles of offending and repeat offending



Focus area 3

Recidivism and rehabilitation

Goals within this area

- Reduce recidivism
- Increase opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration in to the community
- Improve lifelong recovery and rehabilitation outcomes for victims



Focus area 1

Enhancing victim supports and experiences

The IMAC will work with relevant agencies and strategic initiatives to:

Create opportunities for meaningful victim participation in the criminal justice system.

Identify gaps in the timely delivery of victims' access to evidence-based, person-centred trauma-informed supports.

Create a comprehensive and consistent framework outlining how a victim can be supported, how they can participate in and influence different stages of the criminal justice process, including the role and efficacy of the victim impact statement.

Create a fully scoped and funded 'victim navigator' approach to support victims, guiding them through the criminal justice process and ensuring they receive appropriate care and resources.

Recognise and address the unique needs of victims, ensuring they receive appropriate, continuity of and trauma-informed supports through all stages of the justice continuum and beyond.

Reduce system wide retraumatisation of victims from repeated self-advocacy.

Develop a consistent system-wide definition of 'victim' and 'related victim' across relevant legislation and policies.

Promote legislative changes such as widening sentencing discretion and options for courts to ensure that orders are made that provide a principled balance between the rights of the offender and the rights of victims.

Promote continuity and collaboration across health, social services, housing, education and justice sectors to provide holistic and integrated support to victims.

Identify evidence-based and culturally appropriate interventions to ensure that support services are effective and respectful of diverse backgrounds and needs.

Identify system complexities that block victims' access to victim of crime funding.

Implement ongoing training for government agencies to improve workforce capability to ensure they understand and can effectively support the rights and needs of victims.



Focus area 2

Crime prevention and early intervention

The IMAC will work with relevant agencies and strategic initiatives to:

Address systemic issues such as racism, discrimination, poverty, unemployment, gender-based violence, substance misuse, poverty, incarceration rates and homelessness that is crucial for reducing crime and supporting at-risk individuals.

Promote collaboration across health, social services, housing, education and justice sectors to provide a strengths-based, holistic and coordinated responses to at-risk individuals and communities.

Promote continuous and reliable funding to maintain the stability and effectiveness of evidence-based community and non-government organisation programs.

Empower communities to lead evidence-based, accessible, appropriate, coordinated, and place-based responses.

Increase investment in health, mental health services and secure housing to support young people and prevent the escalation of issues that lead to offending.

Promote a service model that includes continuity and system-wide tailored support for young offenders up to age 25 to address their unique needs and reduce recidivism.

Invest in evidence-based programs that strengthen family and community networks to provide support and stability for at-risk youth.

Support the adoption of evidence-based programs that address educational disengagement.



Focus area 3

Recidivism and rehabilitation

The IMAC will work with relevant agencies and strategic initiatives to:

Prioritise the needs of criminalised people and criminalised victims, including early identification and ongoing support upon release to aid their rehabilitation.

Promote support systems and priority access to and continuity of services for vulnerable individuals upon release to meet their basic needs, such as housing, employment, cultural support and healthcare to ensure successful reintegration, rehabilitation, and recovery.

Increase access to evidence-based interventions, programs and social supports for criminalised people.

Promote integrated and coordinated approaches across health, social services, housing, education and justice sectors to provide holistic support to individuals and communities to recover from the impacts of crime.

Assess the capacities of custodial environments to prioritise rehabilitation and recovery, with comprehensive programs tailored to individual needs, including gender and culture.

Implement ongoing training for government agencies to improve workforce capability to ensure they understand and can effectively support the rehabilitation needs of criminalised people.

Ensure a comprehensive needs assessment is conducted upon entry into prison or youth detention to identify and address individual rehabilitation requirements.

Make evidence-based programs accessible to people on remand without requiring a guilty admission to support their rehabilitation and recovery.

Develop and implement a broader range of appropriate sentencing options (excluding serious violent crime) that focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment.

Promote continuity and system-wide tailored support provided for all criminalised people to address their unique needs and reduce recidivism.

Promote greater use of restorative justice principles in offending.

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