

Sponsor: City of Greater Bendigo
Refuter: Ivanhoe Girls Grammar School

Increasing Public Safety in Regional and Rural Areas

Bill 2023

A Bill for an Act to Increase Public Safety in Regional and Rural areas across Victoria. This Bill will focus on preventing Victorians from being in public and domestic environments that could cause them physical or psychological harm and will have more effective and rehabilitative measures in place for those who have been harmed to recover. This includes systemic reform to current protection and safety services administered from hubs and police with increased support from social workers. This Bill also aims to implement education for Victorians that promotes safety in communities and improves public infrastructure to create safe community spaces.

Communities shall be safe because they care about each other and our systems. Organisations and people should have opportunities to collaborate to improve safety and quality of life in the regional and rural areas of Victoria.

A Bill for an Act relating to Increasing Public Safety in Regional and Rural Areas.
To be enacted by the Y's Victorian Youth Parliament.

PART I—Preliminary

Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this Act are;

- (a) To structurally reform community safety sectors such as the police and infrastructure;
- (b) To have community safety and support systems focus more on measures and interventions for the prevention of crime rather than be reactive/punitive;
- (c) To increase community safety;
- (d) To increase awareness and education of community safety.

Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence upon receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill;

- (a) ***The Board/The Board of Increased Public Safety Victoria*** means the Board established by this Bill that promotes Public Safety in Victoria;
- (b) ***Community Safety Hubs*** mean the community centres established in this Bill;
- (c) ***Infrastructure*** means all public infrastructure including but not limited to buildings, streetlights, footpaths, and public transport stations;
- (d) ***Local council*** means the elected council of a Local Government Area;

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- (e) **Public Safety Education program** means the education program established and run by the Board, as per this Bill;
- (f) **Rural and regional areas** mean all areas of the State of Victoria outside of Metropolitan Melbourne;
- (g) **Triage service** means a 24 hour, 7 days a week, telephone-based assessment and support service staffed by senior mental health clinicians, a psychiatric registrar and a consultant psychiatrist.

PART II—Establishment

Clause 4 Establishment of the Increased Public Safety Victoria Board

- 4.1 The Increased Public Safety Victoria (IPSV) Board shall be established.
- 4.2 IPSV shall work with various state departments to review and implement public safety measures within Victoria.
- 4.3 IPSV shall conduct a state-wide review every two years including;
 - (a) Monitoring and evaluating the public safety of Victoria;
 - (b) Monitoring and evaluating implemented public safety measures.
- 4.4 The review shall encompass the following systems, but not be limited to;
 - (a) Victoria Police and all associated employees/organisations;
 - (b) Drug and addiction laws, treatments and programs;
 - (c) Community infrastructure;
 - (d) Public transport services.
- 4.5 The review shall include;
 - (a) An assessment of public engagement with the above mentioned systems;
 - (b) Public sentiments towards the above-mentioned systems.

Clause 5 Establishment of Community Safety Hubs

- 5.1 IPSV shall establish Community Safety Hubs in rural and regional areas across the state of Victoria.
- 5.2 The placement of Community Safety Hubs shall be determined by IPSV based on the needs of each rural and regional area.
- 5.3 Community safety hubs shall:
 - (a) Be open 24/7;
 - (b) Have police available to attend if required;
 - (c) Be operated by social workers;

- (d) Hire its own private security.

Clause 6 Community Safety Hub Services

6.1 Community Safety Hubs shall provide:

- (a) Immediate support and shelter to people escaping violence, including;
 - (i) Domestic violence.
- (b) Community support services, such as providers of;
 - (i) Shelter;
 - (ii) Accommodation;
 - (ii) Resources such as food and bedding.
- (c) Information and advocacy support through a Public Safety Education program as outlined in Clause 7;
- (d) A triage service to those under the influence of drugs, with a focus on medical treatment;
- (e) Support for those with addiction that shall;
 - (i) Re-engage them with community;
 - (ii) Support them to better their wellbeing.

Clause 7 Public Safety Education program

7.1 The Public Safety Education program will educate people on:

- (a) How to stay safe in the community,
- (b) What to do in a high-risk situation,
- (c) How to get help in high-risk situations,
- (d) Alcohol and drug safety.

7.2 The Public Safety Education program will be aimed at education centre attendees such as high school students.

7.3 The method of implementation of the Public Safety Education program in each community shall be at the discretion of the local council and the Board.

- 7.4 The Public Safety Education program shall have the ability to refer its participants to the Community Safety Hubs.

Clause 8 Increased lighting and infrastructure criteria

- 8.1 IPSV shall establish a safety standards criteria that rural and regional areas shall adhere to regarding their infrastructure such as;
- (a) All public transport stops shall have;
 - (i) Adequate lighting installed;
 - (ii) An emergency call button.
 - (b) High risk public areas shall have increased lighting;
 - (c) State-owned CCTV and security cameras in high traffic public areas shall be increased in number.
- 8.2 IPSV shall identify and assess rural and regional areas of high crime risk within 2 years from commencement of this Bill.
- (a) Areas assessed as high risk shall be retrofitted with increased lighting and other safety measures deemed appropriate by IPSV.
- 8.3 IPSV shall assess and rank all rural and regional areas according to level of crime risk within 10 years from commencement of this Bill.
- 8.4 Infrastructure that does not meet the safety standards criteria, shall be refurbished to meet the safety standards criteria.
- 8.4 New development and infrastructure works must meet the safety standards criteria.
- 8.5 IPSV shall establish an online reporting system for members of the community to report areas that are not well lit or do not feel safe.

Clause 9 Social Worker Presence in Policing

- 9.1 Social workers shall have an increased presence in police services, including;

- (a) In police offices;
 - (b) During statement collections;
 - (c) During warranted arrest situations.
- 9.2 All youth and individuals from minority backgrounds shall have rights to request a social worker while engaging with police services;
- (a) Police shall be obliged to inform affected individuals of their right to access a social worker;
 - (b) A social worker shall not assume the role of a guardian or independent person in this setting.
- 9.3 In emergency situations involving youth, the direction of the social worker is primary, unless deemed by the officers to be unsafe for all involved parties.

Clause 10 Increased Policing Services

- 10.1 There shall be an increase in policing services at night and in areas deemed unsafe, as determined by IPSV.
- 10.2 IPSV shall have the power to review current policing practices and implement reforms of policing practices and training;
- (a) This shall apply to all new and existing police employees;
 - (b) The police training program shall be altered in accordance with recommendations made by IPSV.
- 10.3 IPSV shall update police practices to develop approachable police officers by;
- (a) Incorporating social workers into policing;
 - (b) Changing patrol practices;
 - (c) Changing police uniforms;
 - (d) Increasing community connection, involvement and engagement with police.
- 10.4 Police shall issue an annual public report to IPSV regarding the implementation of reforms.