

Written evidence submitted by The Rt Hon Lord Woolf (VIC0049)

1. I am responding to the invitation that the Committee made for representations in respect of the Draft Victims Bill.
2. In the past the Courts have in my view paid insufficient attention to the views of victims as to the extent of their suffering in consequence of actions taken by offenders. However, the position during my service as a member of the judiciary and since I retired has, in my view, dealt with this shortcoming in the criminal justice system.
3. I do not think, therefore, that further legislation is at present required to improve the situation of victims at this time. Indeed, I would discourage the involvement of victims in the criminal justice system being increased. In my view, if this were to happen it could prolong the time in which the focus on the consequences of crimes on victims unnecessarily takes place. The delays in the justice system at the present time are unacceptable already and changes which prolong the time would not be beneficial to the justice system.
4. It is particularly true of the release of offenders serving sentences. In my view it would be unwise to blur the situation of the imposition of sentences and questions of the release of prisoners who are or have been serving sentences of imprisonment.

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