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NSW Victims Commissioner Bill Raises Concerns

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The New South Wales (NSW) Labor Government, led by Premier Chris Minns, is set to introduce the Victim Rights and Victims of Crime Commissioner Bill 2025 in the state Parliament on August 7, 2025. This legislation establishes an Independent Victims Commissioner, intended to advocate for victims of crime and oversee the Charter of Victims' Rights. The initiative fulfills an election commitment from 2023.

The proposed Independent Victims Commissioner will be appointed by the Governor and operate independently of direct government control. The role includes powers to request or compel public agencies to provide information regarding alleged Charter breaches. It also allows the Commissioner to prepare special reports for Parliament. The new Commissioner will replace the existing advisory board with a Victims Advisory

Committee that includes representatives from NSW Police, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Legal Aid, the Department of Communities and Justice, and members of the public, including an Aboriginal representative.

Currently, the Commissioner of Victims Rights handles responsibilities under the Victims Rights and Support Act 2013, such as managing the Victims Support Scheme and overseeing forensic patient victim registrations. Under the proposed law, many of these responsibilities would be transferred to the Independent Commissioner, who will also be responsible for driving systemic reform and advising government on victim-related policies.

Supporters of the bill argue that this new role will provide stronger advocacy and greater visibility for victims within the justice system. Legal professionals and community advocates have long called for more independence in how victims are represented, along with stronger mechanisms to ensure government accountability. Annual reports on agency compliance and clearer complaint pathways are seen as important steps forward.

However, critics are skeptical. The Shadow Attorney-General and some opposition members warn that the new position could add unnecessary bureaucracy without offering substantial improvements. They argue that the current system already performs many of the proposed functions and that the changes could lead to duplication. Questions have also been raised about the actual independence of an appointee selected by the government, and about whether funding for the new office will be used effectively.

In 2024, NSW recorded over 60,000 incidents of violent crime. The government says this volume of cases shows the urgent need to improve services for victims. The proposed Commissioner could help coordinate these services and improve policy outcomes. Still, some believe it is essential to ensure that this reform delivers real benefits and does not just increase costs without results.