

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL 2023

Submission No: 9
Submitted by: Sandra Elton
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Inquiry into Strengthening Community Safety Bill

Victim Impact Statement : Youth Crime in Townsville

22/2/2023

Dear Parliamentary Committee,

I am writing this submission in support of the proposed bill to change the Youth Justice Act. However, I also challenge the committee to extend the amendments further to include minimum sentencing. The introduction of maximum sentencing will only be useful if any sentence is imposed. In my area of Townsville, often there is no sentence imposed for youth crimes and the victims of crime are often told that no charges were even laid; this includes violent incidents involving injured elderly community members in my immediate area.

In my professional role in crisis support (separate to my role at CB Designs), I am increasingly supporting Townsville residents who are victims of these youth criminals, and whose lives have been thrown into crisis as a result of job loss due to lack of transportation to attend work after a vehicle theft. Others are left destitute by the exorbitant insurance excesses that they must pay to replace their vehicle, if in fact they could afford the extremely high insurance premiums in the first place. Many can't and so have no insurance and therefore no recourse to recover from the impact of crime.

In addition, Townsville is in the grip of a housing crisis, so many of these victims of crime were already struggling to make ends meet and keep up with costs of living, often while enduring the complexity of life without a home for their families. Many are permanently housed in caravan parks, free camping or bouncing between homes of families and friends, or just living in their cars. Unless they get stolen. These victims are also suffering long term mental health impacts from often violent crimes, while the perpetrators are repeatedly let off any form of justice by the courts and what the Townsville community considers a failed Youth Justice Act.

These challenges have been amplified by the ongoing rhetoric of some of our elected MPs and the Premier herself, that there is no crime problem in Townsville and that Qld has the toughest laws in the country. This is beyond frustrating to our community to be disregarded so easily and often, even after multiple lives have been lost due to the failed laws.

I have included the following as evidence of the impact of the failure of the Youth Justice Act to ensure public safety:

- Facebook post from our small business page C&B Designs from 20/2/22 detailing the impact of youth crime and the number of instances just our two families have endured in a four-month period in 2022.
- Letter to Hinchinbrook MP Nicholas Dametto on 23/2/22 detailing an incident the same day of criminal youths driving stolen cars at my 11 year old son & his teammates as they trained on a soccer field. These cars had been out wreaking havoc in the community for at least 6 hours prior to the incident.

- Letter to Hinchinbrook MP Nicholas Dametto dated 12/6/22 detailing an incident of vehicle theft and violent crimes committed, where police told us they could not intercept and the vehicle was at large for 24 hours until we recovered it ourselves via community information.
- Letter to Hinchinbrook MP Nicholas Dametto dated 20/6/22 detailing a second incident of vehicle theft on 19/6/22 of the same business vehicle stolen on 12/6/22. Again, police were unable to intervene and we found the vehicle ourselves based on community information. This incident involved armed police officers making no attempt to intercept the offenders who returned in other stolen vehicles and drove straight past police and our company directors.

Please consider this evidence of real life impact on my community in making your decision and voting on this bill. It needs to serve as a starting point for reforms that are effective in restoring order, fairness and prioritising public safety above the human rights of the offenders.

Regards,

Sandra Elton

Attachments:

Facebook Business Post C&B Designs





Left Out In The Cold

We are a small family owned business, and this is our hard earned business vehicle being recovered from a remote location in Kelso yesterday. This is the second time in one week that we have spent the weekend relying on community sightings to get our vehicle back. Both times we were only able to reclaim our property thanks to a community member locating it for us.

Building a small business is hard. Keeping it running for more than 20 years is harder. It takes immense sacrifice, effort, perseverance and hard work. So when we see our property being targetted, used in criminal acts, aiming to run people off the road, ram raiding other small businesses and stealing more property, we look to our justice systems for assistance.

Sadly, the systems we have now are so broken that, we have had to find the vehicle ourselves, wait for it to be abandoned and then reclaim it -TWICE.

Police Officers watched on in one incident, doing nothing to protect us or apprehend the criminals as they drove past in other stolen vehicles, returning to pick up our truck from their dumping spot. These criminals, who were considered armed, had a 'Return to Prison' warrant out on them, yet were allowed to drive directly past police without even an attempt to intercept them. QPS left us in the dark, literally, out in the scrub with our stolen vehicle to wait for the tow truck to recover it via a bobcat. We can't tell you how completely this system has failed to protect us or catch those responsible for these crimes.

The ineffective youth justice laws, despite some arrests after the first theft, resulted in the very same criminals being released in time to put us through the same ordeal all over again the next weekend.

The two families who own CB Designs have already seen enough crime in 2022, with one of our children endangered on a soccer field, when stolen cars drove at the children as they trained. We've experienced house break-ins by armed criminals while our family slept, business vandalism and property damage at the hands of these criminals, all while the system that is meant to ensure public safety, enables criminal behaviour instead.

The costs involved in re-keying our homes and business overnight, the costs of accessing our insurance and the ongoing costs of higher premiums all land with us. Nobody covers our expenses, yet the criminals have a pool of funding to cover their bail.

This list doesn't even begin to cover the mental health impact of the ongoing crime epidemic. The stress and extra workload of dealing with this ordeal, while continuing to trade, on the back of covid impacts is too much. We no longer feel safe in our homes and our children are feeling the impacts too.

At the same time this truck was being re-stolen, our child was re-traumatized by another stolen vehicle driving dangerously near the house where the family was sleeping, triggering flashbacks of the soccer field incident.

Enough is enough. Good, decent, hardworking people should not be held to ransom by a system that protects the criminals, not the public.

So we are asking the State Government, when will you fix this problem for all the fed up people of Townsville? Please don't tell us that you already have, because we've just been through it-twice- and we can tell you that the current system is definitely not working.

[Nick Dametto MP](#)

[Aaron Harper MP](#)

[Les Walker MP - Mundingburra](#)

[Scott Stewart MP - Member for Townsville](#)

[David Crisafulli MP](#)

[ABC North Queensland](#)

[9 News Queensland](#)

[7NEWS Townsville](#)

Letter to Hinchinbrook MP Nicholas Dametto dated 23/2/22:

Sent: Wednesday, 23 February 2022 6:53 PM

To: Townsville Electorate Office <Townsville@parliament.qld.gov.au>; Thuringowa Electorate Office <Thuringowa@parliament.qld.gov.au>; Hinchinbrook Electorate Office <Hinchinbrook@parliament.qld.gov.au>; Mundingburra Electorate Office <MUNDINGBURRA@parliament.qld.gov.au>

Subject: Youth Justice Laws-Incident Wed 23/2/22

Hi,

I'm writing to alert you all to an incident that could have ended tragically this afternoon in Burt St Aitkenvale.

While the 11 and 12 year old representative soccer teams were completing their weekly training, two stolen cars entered the fields and proceeded to hoon around the fields. The players ran to safety after parents alerted the kids and coaches of the cars, with one assistant coach almost being hit by the cars.

Police were called and attended, but not before the cars completed their skids and left. Needless to say, the kids were all pretty shaken as just moments before they had been doing drills right where the cars entered.

So I am asking all of you, as our sitting member representatives, what are you doing about bringing this crime epidemic under control? I'm a parent of one of these kids and the current system is failing to resolve the issues.

Today the failed youth justice laws allowed these two stolen cars to be out on the roads for at least 5 hours before this dangerous incident occurred (facebook posts show offenders hanging out of the windows of the cars in Brampton Avenue, Cranbrook at 12.15pm). How will you keep our community safe now?? How will you keep our children safe now? Because what is currently in place IS NOT WORKING. QPS attended quickly and as usual do a great job-we all know that is not the problem.

Please do more and fix the broken justice system that allows offenders multiple chances to re-offend without consequence. The system that allowed my child to be in harms way on a suburban soccer field in the middle of a weekday afternoon.

You have to do better, please for all of us.

Regards, a very concerned Mother,

Sandra Elton



Letter to Hinchinbrook MP Nicholas Dametto dated 12/6/22:

Sent: Sunday, 12 June 2022 5:18 PM

To: Hinchinbrook Electorate Office <Hinchinbrook@parliament.qld.gov.au>

Subject: Youth Justice Laws Update

Hi Mr Dametto,

Just thought we'd take a minute to update you on how our ineffective youth justice laws continue to fail hard working families and small businesses across Townsville.

Our business vehicle was stolen last night and has been sighted continuously throughout the day today. So far since last night, our vehicle has been to the Burdekin, believed to be involved in a business ram raid, a fuel drive off at Green Acres service station, and is currently attempting to run other drivers off the road. So far it has been at large for more than 12 hours with multiple sightings reported to police.

The police have advised us they are not allowed to engage and have to wait until they can corner it in a street or similar to resolve the situation. As a business owner this is infuriating, as the directors of this small family owned business had to work tirelessly over 20 years to earn these vehicles. Insurance will likely cover it, but these vehicles are no longer available and there is likely a two year wait to replace the vehicle.

We also have to keep our other identical business vehicle off the road to save confusion in multiple sightings being reported to police. How are we supposed to continue to trade without the use of our vehicles?

This year the youth justice laws have already failed us once, when our youngest son's life was endangered by another stolen vehicle's rampage on a junior soccer training field.

Please ask the government how much more our family has to sacrifice before they restore public safety for all in our community, not just the criminals. How many more people have to be endangered by weaponised stolen vehicles?

We thank you for your ongoing attempts to resolve this in parliament. Please feel welcome to use our story to communicate that the situation in Townsville is not getting any better.

Regards,

Sandra Elton

Letter to Hinchinbrook MP Nicholas Dametto dated 20/6/22:

Re: Youth Justice Laws Update



Home <cselton2@bigpond.com>

To: Hinchinbrook Electorate Office

Cc: [REDACTED]

Reply

Reply All

Forward

...

Sun 19/06/2022 8:46 AM

Thanks Caitlin and Nick,

We have awoken this morning to this same business vehicle being RE-STOLEN from the mechanic it was towed to for repairs. They now have all the keys for all the vehicles this business was working on. They moved two cars to get to our Landcruiser!

This nightmare begins again for us and the mechanic's business owner who now has to use his insurance, as well as the all owners of any other vehicles they decide to come back for.

Can we PLEASE solve this youth justice problem now?? At midnight the same night they were re-stealing our vehicle, I was awake comforting our terrified son as another stolen vehicle was terrorising our suburb of Oakdale Heights in Deeragun. This vehicle was thrashing about in the scrub beside our property before menacing the streets of our quiet suburb. This was giving my 11 year son flashbacks of the day stolen vehicles targetted their junior soccer training, and he had to run for his safety. He thought they had crashed through into our property and were coming for us last night, and was genuinely terrified for his safety.

Who's going to deal with the mental health impact of this never-ending crime cycle? Is there a plan for that?

In my work running crisis support programs at our local community centre, we are increasingly having to use our limited funding to support the victims of these crimes, who lose jobs, incomes, sometimes their homes once their car is stolen and they have now way to replace it. Not to mention the mental health support that is needed long term to support these people through their ordeal.

Please, please get the government to action the ineffectiveness of the current youth justice laws that have allowed these intentional criminals to be caught and released in the same week to be put to justice and held accountable for the impact of their actions. They were arrested during a house raid in Cosgrove mid-week and are now out in our community causing more havoc. What a joke our justice system is in its current state.

The government needs to do better, now.

Regards,

A Fed Up Townsville Resident
Sandra Elton

(Word Version of above screenshot):

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Regards,

A Fed Up Townsville Resident

Sandra Elton