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JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr MA Hunt MP—Chair
Ms ND Marr MP
Mr JT Barounis MP
Hon. GJ Butcher MP
Hon. MAJ Scanlon MP

Staff present:

Ms F Denny—Committee Secretary

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE EXPANDING ADULT CRIME, ADULT TIME AND TAKING A STRONG STANCE ON DRUGS AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AMENDMENT BILL

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Tuesday, 31 March 2026

Maryborough

TUESDAY, 31 MARCH 2026

The subcommittee met at 9.00 am.

CHAIR: Good morning, everybody. I declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026. My name is Marty Hunt MP. I am the member for Nicklin and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today. With me here today meeting as a subcommittee of the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee are the Hon. Meaghan Scanlon MP, member for Gaven and acting deputy chair; the Hon. Glenn Butcher MP, member for Gladstone; Natalie Marr MP, member for Thuringowa; and under standing order 209 the member for Maryborough, John Barounis, will be participating as a member of the subcommittee today. I am sure many of you would know John.

This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence.

The Legislative Assembly and its committees recognise that matters awaiting or under adjudication in all courts exercising a criminal jurisdiction should not be referred to from the moment a charge is made against a person until the matter is resolved in a court. All witnesses are, therefore, reminded not to refer to matters before the criminal courts in their evidence. This has been an issue in the past. I really need people to understand that if somebody has committed an offence against you and has been charged but it has not been resolved by the court yet, you are not permitted to talk about it in a public hearing, so please do not do that.

As chair, I also ask members and witnesses to observe standing order 117, which restricts the naming of at-risk children. Importantly, evidence today should not readily identify a child who is subject to either the Child Protection Act 1999 or the Youth Justice Act 1992. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

These proceedings are also being transcribed by Hansard. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages.

Finally, the committee notes that today's hearing could be triggering for those who have been affected by crime. If any witnesses today require a break during proceedings, please indicate. Please also approach the secretariat, Fran, if today's proceedings raise any issues for you and she may assist. Please, everybody, make sure your mobile phones are off or on silent mode.

DONE, Mr Simon, Principal, Maryborough State High School

CHAIR: Welcome. I invite you to make an opening statement to the committee.

Mr Done: I am a proud employee of Education Queensland of 31 years. I have been principal at marvellous Maryborough State High School for 11 years now. I have taught in Yarraman, I was in Gladstone as a deputy principal and head of department, in northern Brisbane as a deputy principal at Morayfield State High School and am now at Maryborough State High School, which will be my last teaching post. I will be here till I turn the lights out.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement regarding the impacts of the Adult Crime, Adult Time legislation. I speak from both a personal and professional perspective. Recently I was directly affected by criminal behaviour when I was verbally assaulted by a member of the public and subsequently threatened with the theft of my vehicle. I followed the appropriate processes, reporting the matter to police and attending court. However, the outcome of the case was not clearly communicated. Despite further attempts to seek information, I had received no response regarding that result from the QPS. The experience left me with a sense that the system did not entirely and fully support victims seeking closure or accountability. While I am certain this was completed, I have no knowledge of the result of what occurred, which leaves me wondering.

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Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill

From my perspective as a school principal, I am deeply concerned about the broader implications of the Adult Crime, Adult Time for younger people. While the intent of the legislation is to address serious offending and improve community safety, it carries the potential for life-altering consequences for youth. Early interaction with the criminal justice system, particularly where custodial sentences are involved, can significantly disrupt education, wellbeing and future opportunities. Recent data indicates approximately half of reported crimes are being committed by young people and this proportion is increasing. This trend is concerning and demands a considered response.

There is also a significant long-term economic and social cost of disengagement, with disengaged young Australians costing taxpayers a staggering \$18.8 billion by increasing crime, clogging health services, relying on welfare and reducing tax revenue. This data point is from the Mitchell Institute in 2017. That was the cost a decade ago. I shudder to think what it is now. It is worth considering what outcomes may have been achieved if even a portion of that investment was directed proactively into early intervention, education and support rather than punitive actions with four-letter slogans.

In addition to these concerns I wish to address the proposed laws relating to the ability to move on individuals where their behaviour is causing anxiety in public spaces. From a school leadership perspective such measures have the potential to provide practical support around schools maintaining safe and orderly environments in and around school grounds. When applied appropriately, the powers may assist in addressing behaviours that while not always rising to levels of serious criminal offending, nonetheless create fear, disruption and disengagement within the school community. However, the capacity to be used frivolously and vexatiously is also a clear and concerning issue.

The gazettal of Maryborough State High School as part of a designated business and community precinct does present clear operational benefits, as it would to all state schools. This designation has the potential to strengthen the capacity of authority of people in positions such as mine to respond to antisocial or concerning behaviour by external agencies or parents in the immediate vicinity of the school. Importantly, it supports the protection of students within the school environment from external influences, including individuals who are not enrolled but whose presence or behaviour may impact student safety, wellbeing and learning.

From a practical standpoint, this will assist school leadership in maintaining clearer boundaries between the school and broader community, enabling staff to focus on educational outcomes while having confidence that the appropriate mechanisms exist to manage external risks. It reinforces the message that schools, particularly state schools, are safe, structured environments, distinct from external influences that may undermine that purpose.

On paper, this legislation has the potential to improve safety and outcomes for the majority of Queenslanders. However, its effectiveness will depend heavily on consistent and considered application, a supportive and well-resourced judiciary, and strict adherence to fair and transparent processes. It is critical that any legislative response balances accountability with rehabilitation. Without this balance, we risk entrenching disadvantage and perpetuating cycles of offending rather than reducing them. Thank you for considering my perspective.

CHAIR: As a long-term teacher and principal of a school, you would know schools often have students from when they are very young to teenagers. I would call that education possibly early intervention in terms of school rules and educating them how to be good citizens and good students within the school. How important is it in a school environment, though, that there are consequences for actions?

Mr Done: I will answer that question slightly differently. We have students for six hours a day and there are 24 hours in a day. In terms of saying to any education department, whether it be Department of Education, independent schools or Catholic Education, that there needs to be consequences within the school environment, I say we do the six hours a day; the other 18 hours a day are up to parents, up to community standards and up to expectations. We can do what we can do. We have the Education (General Provisions) Act where we can deal with that and we have our things in place.

As the principal of an independent public school, I have certain autonomy. There are only two people who can suspend or exclude a student from a state school. One is the director-general or the Minister for Education and the other one is me, so I have that authority. The consequences that teachers and, therefore, principals and administration put in place in my school—I can speak for mine—are such that it is clear I work on what is called a culture of inevitability: kids know what is going to happen. In terms of the other 18 hours a day, that is where society comes in and that is where I think some of this stuff lies: the societal expectations around where it is.

CHAIR: The point I was making is that young people in a school environment get used to rules and consequences and outside of that environment it is certainly a similar thing.

Mr Done: What you have said there hits the nail on the head. The culture of inevitability needs to be there and with inevitability comes certainty. For example, in my school if I have two students who decide to raise their fists, they know they both get suspended. There is no, 'He started it,' 'He threw the first punch,' or 'Oh it was self-defence.' No, they are both gone and they know it. If you have a look at the rates of suspension and student disciplinary absence at my school, it is the lowest on the Fraser Coast. That is for a reason: the culture of inevitability is in place.

CHAIR: They know about the consequences.

Mr Done: Yes.

Ms SCANLON: Thank you very much for appearing before the committee and for the work that you do. I note what you have said about slogans and the importance of early intervention and prevention and making sure that any laws we pass actually work. I am curious as to your views around whether you think Queenslanders should see the full expert legal advice that helped inform some of these laws, particularly in relation to aiding suicide. Some organisations like Voice for Victims and even representatives from the Queensland Law Society have asked for justification for aiding suicide being included in these laws, particularly given the complexity of those circumstances, especially with family arrangements. Do you have anything to add?

Mr Done: I am very careful about my responses here for a number of reasons. Sadly, I have been in a position where I have had to attend a number of funerals of students at my school as well as others where a suicide has been completed. There are many complex factors around why any person decides to go down that route. It is an interesting perspective from the point of view of how much a person aids that. There are some very overt things. If you see things on social media and there is a push and a push, that is very different. The complex nature around a completion of a suicide is—I do not think a legislative solution is going to do that. Yes, there will be mitigating factors and I know that discussions and conversations happen. My concern is when you are at the other side of that, from a parent perspective and from a community perspective, you want someone to blame. The issue is you cannot talk to the victim. The parents are looking for someone to say why they did not see this coming et cetera. It is very easy to then go to the Facebook posts and TikTok posts and say, 'That's the reason.'

It is an extraordinarily complex situation that I think a simple legislative response is not going to appropriately solve. I think there are far more measured and considered things. Like I said to you before about the multiple billions of dollars sitting there in prevention and proactivity, mental health is a major issue. I have literally just left a leadership team meeting from 20 heads of department and deputy principals in my own school that I will then go back to. They are talking about burnout; they are talking about the stress levels of how things are going. My school is relatively well run, if I do say so myself. The issue is in this case these are educated people with university degrees who are starting to talk about the foothills of where people end up with a completed suicide. I am not suggesting that my entire leadership team is suicidal by any measure of anything, but that is how it starts: the ability to not cope with your reality.

Ms MARR: Thank you for being here today. It is good to see an educator in the room. Going back to something you said earlier, I do totally agree with you that there has to be investment in early intervention and rehabilitation programs. In the last 12 months we have funded 47 new early intervention programs, which is part of this Adult Crime, Adult Time. You were talking about concerns that people are going to be moved on where it is not appropriate. I want you to speak to the part of the bill that says—

... considered justified to provide an immediate response and deterrent to a person exhibiting disruptive behaviour that may be ongoing or repeated and provide immediate protection to members of the community.

An example is disorderly, offensive, threatening or violent behaviour. Can I get you to comment on this. We are putting this in place to make sure that our community is safe in areas where we want them to go. We want them to enjoy places in our community. With those boundaries, do you still think there will be people moved where that is inappropriate?

Mr Done: I could not agree more, but I will go back to your reading of the bill there and I will go to one word: 'immediate'. The concern is that the QPS is stretched too thin. The thin blue line has never been thinner at this stage. Realistically, we are in a position where this is an unfortunate reality, and I do not know of a way that could fix that without putting a police officer in every park, every corner, every public area—every everything. I have been in a position where I had to make that phone call and it was an immediate response. I will give you a little bit of background. I was down by the water's edge down there. I had a lady who was clearly altered in her behaviours and intent. There was then some Maryborough

threatening behaviour. She had decided to move on after threatening me. She then turned, walked around and said, 'Give me your keys.' I'm, like, 'Are you kidding me?' It was a threat of basically 'I want your car'.

The QPS was rung, as you said, immediately. The concern was that it took somewhere close to 90 minutes for that to happen. This was at 1 Walker Street. I reckon it is a lazy kilometre from 1 Walker Street to the QPS in town—it is a kilometre and a half if you have to drive it—90 minutes. I realise that little old me is not going to be on the priority list of the QPS, but the 'immediate' part of that bill I think is going to be the biggest concern. When people need it, you need it. If the legislation does go down that route with move-on powers it does have the potential for benefit.

As I said in my statement, my concern is who gets to define all of the terms in the bill? Forgive me, I cannot remember all of the ones that are there. It is basically the immediate, the prolonged—the this, that and the other. I have had parents at the school who have gone bat crazy out the front, and from my school to the QPS is 600 metres. It is literally on the same road. I have had issues where I have needed an immediate response. I understand the QPS is stretched thinly, but that immediate response is going to be the thing that may well trip people up. The legislation is sound. The legislation is fine. At the same time, who gets to define 'vexatious'? Who gets to define 'prolonged' without due evidence? Then the secondary problem is the 'immediate' part of that.

Ms MARR: You said that the thin line has never been thinner. I would just like to let you know that we have had more police officers put on in the last 12 months than ever seen before, so we are putting on more police officers. I met a new police officer this morning from Maryborough as well. I just wanted to make sure that was corrected.

Mr BUTCHER: The drug diversion side of this bill has the strong support of police. As well, there are current laws in place in relation to drug diversion. What that means with the new legislation moving forward is that more police will now be doing work they were not doing previously. You have talked about the thin blue line. Does this mean that in your opinion this legislation will see police resources stretched even thinner than they currently are?

Mr Done: I do not presume to talk for the Police Commissioner or anybody in the QPS. At the same time, if I use my own experience and education, the more that you add to a role's statement in education and the more complex it gets, the more people you need, the more resources you have, the more complex it gets. I take the point that we have had more QPS officers involved. Similarly, if you are going to make a job more complex then you are going to need more people and all it becomes is just holding the tide more than anything else. If we go back 20, 30 or 40 years, the complexities the QPS would have had to deal with were very, very different. By all standards society has become different, I will just say. The additional complexity and additional role statement means that—as I said, I can speak for education—if you increase the role statement but you do not increase the time, pulses go up.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Done. That brings to an end the time allocated for your evidence today. We appreciate you appearing before the committee and giving your insights. Thank you very much.

WARREN, Ms Michelle, Founder, House of Holabox

Ms Warren: I am a lifelong resident of Maryborough, 48 years, and I am the founder of House of Holabox on Bazaar Street. My husband and I are the developers behind The Queens, a private investment in the revitalisation of the historic Queens Hotel building on the corner of Kent and Adelaide streets. I support this bill and I will explain why. I will speak particularly to the antisocial behaviour in the CBD today. I want to be specific, because statistics alone do not capture what this actually looks and feels like on the ground. At The Queens we have documented many incidents of antisocial behaviour and these are just a small snippet of those. Some of these I may not be able to speak about due to being in a criminal justice case at the moment.

CHAIR: I will just remind you of the rules around that. If it is currently before a court and it has not been resolved, it should not be mentioned.

Ms Warren: No, so I will skip over some of those. Assaults, screaming, yelling at customers and community members walking down the street, attacks by obviously drug-affected persons—children are witnessing this, children who are simply passing through their own town centre. At our current Bazaar Street store there is a public toilet block across the road in our beautiful Queen's Park and it is a regular gathering point for yelling, screaming and open drug use and dealing throughout business hours. Policelink is frequently called but their hands are tied.

The harm nobody measures is wellbeing. Not every impact of antisocial behaviour leaves a visible mark. A customer who crosses the road to avoid a confrontation has not been physically harmed but they have been denied the simple right to feel safe in their own town. A staff member who dreads opening up alone in the morning has not been assaulted but they carry that anxiety into every shift. A child who watches a man being kicked on a park bench is not injured but that experience does not leave them easily. Chronic exposure to these threatening environments, even without direct physical contact, is well understood to contribute to anxiety, hypervigilance and a diminished sense of safety and belonging.

These are not minor inconveniences; they accumulate and they affect how people engage with their community. The community's wellbeing is not just an individual matter; it is an economic and social one. They stop recommending the area to friends and family; they start wondering whether they want to stay. The psychological cost of sustained antisocial behaviour is diffuse and largely invisible, but it is absolutely real and it is being borne by this community every single day.

Our CBD has become known as having an open door for antisocial behaviour, and we believe repeat offenders congregate here because there are no real boundaries and little consequence. Until that changes, the behaviour will not change. When customers feel unsafe they stop coming into town. When staff feel unsafe businesses cannot operate extended trading hours. The impact falls on every business and service in the precinct. There are hidden costs that are rarely discussed: higher insurance premiums, security system expenses, property repair bills and suppressed financial property values. These costs are borne entirely by small business owners. There is also a staffing dimension. Good workers choose where they work, and a CBD with a reputation for being unsafe makes it harder to attract and retain quality employees in a regional town already competing with cities for talent.

There are legitimate questions about the implementation costs of this bill. Issuing move-on directions and banning notices requires police time and administrative processing. Breaches that result in criminal charges place additional demand on an already stretched justice system. Declared precincts require ongoing monitoring. These are real costs and they should be properly resourced, but let's weigh those costs against what has already been spent. Every police call that results in no actionable outcome is a waste of officer time. Every court appearance for a repeat offender who was never meaningfully deterred earlier in the chain is an avoidable justice system cost. Every business that closes, reduces hours or relocates because the CBD feels unsafe represents lost rates revenue, lost employment and lost economic activity that the government eventually responds to in other ways.

Done well, with targeted precinct declarations, proper resourcing and consistent enforcement, this bill is an investment in conditions that generate economic return. A safer CBD means more traffic, more tourism spend, more private investment, more people choosing to live here. That return will compound over time. The economic case, the town's reputation for safety, is not just a quality-of-life issue; it is an economic asset and its absence is an economic liability.

Maryborough CBD is the gateway to our region. It is where visitors form their first impression and where investors decide whether this town is worth backing. When that impression involves witnessing an assault, a drug deal on the corner or someone being intimidated on the footpath, they do not come back. They tell others about travels through online reviews and social media far faster than any tourism campaign can recover from. We are the official 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Maryborough

Paralympic Games host city for archery. International athletes, officials, accredited media and visitors from around the world will walk through this CBD and form an impression of our town that will be shared globally. Maryborough has a seat at that table and we have six years. What impression do we want them to take home?

There is also an emerging opportunity as metro housing prices continue to escalate and technology enables more people than ever to work from anywhere. Regional centres like Maryborough are genuine candidates for a new wave of residents: professionals, young families, and entrepreneurs actively looking for an affordable, liveable alternative to the city. These are people who will buy or build homes here, start businesses here and employ locals. But before they move they will do their research. They read reviews. They visit community pages. They will walk our streets. The question they are asking is not just 'can I afford it?'; it is 'do I want to live here?' Safety, amenity and pride in a town centre are the deciding factors. Getting our public spaces right is not just about retaining the community we have; it is about attracting the community we need for our future.

I recognise the broader social challenges our community faces and I want to be clear: I am compassionate towards those in our region affected by the lack of affordable housing, including those living rough in and around our CBD and those living with mental health challenges. I see these people every day and I understand there is still a long way to go in providing meaningful support. I would support those efforts. Hardship does not remove personal responsibility, and the responsibility to behave safely in shared spaces applies to everyone regardless of circumstance. Public spaces must be safe for all, including those doing it tough.

In closing, I will say that passing this law matters, but so does using it. Many CBD business owners have quietly stopped calling police—not because they gave up, but because experience has taught them that nothing changes. This legislation needs to be followed by visible, consistent enforcement. We want to see it used. Small businesses should not have to start their day cleaning a shopfront. Staff should not manage threatening behaviour as part of their job. A town preparing to welcome the world should not have its reputation undermined by contact that goes unchecked, and a community working hard to attract new investment, new residents and new opportunities deserves the foundations to make that possible. I support this bill and I urge the committee to do the same.

CHAIR: Thank you, Michelle, for appearing before us today and adding your voice to the community, speaking on behalf of the community, because it is voices like yours that have made it to the highest level of government through the hardworking local member here who brings these things to the ministers and brings these laws back to the community to hear feedback on. Thank you for your appearance today and thank you for the voice you are adding to this. Noting your concerns around community behaviour, and this is aimed at behaviour, as you noted, not just vulnerable people, and the designated business and community precincts—the declaration of those is by regulation by the minister—where would you like to see those precincts in Maryborough where you believe the community is entitled to feel safe?

Ms Warren: Particularly the CBD. We already have a zoned CBD, a principal place of activity. We have most of our retail and services in that area—our banks, most of our office amenities. We need our community to visit those places. It should be a safe precinct and zoned that way.

Ms SCANLON: I just want to touch on police resourcing. I acknowledge your point around the fact that businesses have stopped calling police, I think you have said, which may speak to why good-order offences are actually slightly down this year but assault, sexual offences and robbery are all up. Given that part of this bill will actually divert police resources to minor possession of drug use, which will effectively mean police will now need to spend about an estimated 250,000 hours of time not responding to things like assault, does that concern you? Does it concern you that part of this bill will actually stretch that thin line even thinner?

Ms Warren: Yes, it is concerning. Inaction is costly as well. We need to have the proper resources on both sides. Yes, it will be stretched, but targeting behaviour early should limit that section of where police need to respond to minor activity in town or antisocial behaviour, I feel, and then we still have resources for the other components of the bill.

CHAIR: There were some pretty wild assumptions there. Member for Maryborough?

Mr BAROUNIS: Thank you, Michelle, for coming this morning. It is nice to hear from someone from local business who has dealt with this situation for a long time. I am very proud and pleased to see you still in business. That is very important and it tells me you are not going to give up, regardless of what has been going on during this time. I would like to ask you about the benefits you would see for local businesses and the community from the introduction of our designated business and

community precincts. There is lots of talk about the police force, but in regard to designated business and community precincts, when someone does something and the police have the power to remove them, that person will not be able to come back for a certain period. Do you think that will improve the situation?

Ms Warren: Yes. Under current police laws they are able to ask somebody to move on but from a specific location. Legally, they can go 20 metres down the road in the same precinct. If they have been causing disruption all morning, yes, they move them on now, but they are still causing disruption up the street. Under the new bill they have the powers to remove that person for 24 hours. That gives us breathing space—that person may have calmed or moved on or whatnot—and then there are consequences for them returning to action the same behaviour the next day. I feel that is really important.

Mr BUTCHER: Obviously I do not live here so I do not see it, but I certainly have heard of some of the issues. Do you believe that there has been a certain point where things have changed, where more people are coming into the central business district particularly here in Maryborough and bringing with that their bad behaviour and drug use and mental health? It ties in to your comments in your statement around housing for these people. If they have a roof over their head then they are not in the parks and they are not rough sleeping. Obviously there have been some changes in housing support for those vulnerable people in the last 16 months. Has there been a noticeable change of more people coming in on the back of not having housing or support for moving into their own houses here in Maryborough?

Ms Warren: Absolutely there is a pattern, although we find it comes in waves. I do not know what the trigger is. Seeing people sleeping rough on a park bench is not antisocial behaviour under Queensland law. What this bill targets is the behaviour—the disorderly, threatening, violent and offensive conduct. We understand there is more support happening with mental health and housing. That is a long-term solution. What we need now is an immediate solution to counteract the effects of the behaviour.

Mr BUTCHER: I notice that this is probably one of the most CCTVed towns I have ever been in in my life. When we are doing these laws it is about the whole of the state. Obviously your council has done a very good job because if police are arresting people and moving them on it certainly helps to have visual capture of that misbehaviour. Across the state there will be other communities that have this implemented on them that do not have that. I note that you said there has to be investment in this. Do you support more of that and, obviously, government helping to pay for these precincts to have CCTV coverage so they can actually charge these people with the move-on offences?

Ms Warren: There is a grant available now for the local council. The first round was accessible by business owners and now there is one available for the council to provide measures for security systems and lockdown measures. We installed many security cameras and spent a lot of money at The Queen's, which we have not taken over yet. We are still in the development stage. We have provided, on many occasions, footage to the police, because we are in a main part of town, that they can use to effectively charge those offending people. Yes, we do need more assistance to provide those security measures.

CHAIR: I want to move to some of the comments around police resourcing and their ability to deal with this, noting that under the last Labor government we had a net increase of just 76 police in four years and in the last 18 months we have had a net increase under this government of 694—almost 10 times more police into the area.

Mr BUTCHER: That is not true. It is going backwards.

CHAIR: In relation to the resources, obviously police change their priorities based on legislation all the time. It happens all the time. When new legislation is brought in priorities change; focus changes. Do you support these designated community precincts and community safety as a priority for police in your area?

Ms Warren: There are many issues that our police force are dealing with in our area. The CBD is a small portion of that, I guess—an equal portion—and, yes, I agree with providing more policing resources.

CHAIR: When you call them for somebody behaving in a violent manner, you would like them to deal with that as a priority if they can?

Ms Warren: Yes. At the moment we are able to call triple-0 and they will respond as soon as they can. Policelink is a different matter. It does take some time and by that time that person has moved on or calmed down or committed an offence further up the street out of our eyesight.

CHAIR: As the time has expired for your appearance I would like to reiterate to you and the room to never be scared to call triple-0. If you feel under threat or somebody's behaviour is making you feel unsafe please call triple-0, not necessarily Policelink, if an incident is occurring.

CLUNN, Ms Michelle, President, Maryborough Chamber of Commerce

Ms Clunn: Originally De'Anne Stegert was going to appear on behalf of the chamber, but unfortunately she has been called to a family emergency. De'Anne was a good choice to represent the business community and the chamber because not only is she a passionate member of the chamber but also she is a passionate member of the business community. She owns a salon—a couple of businesses, actually—in the CBD and has been directly impacted by some of the issues that we are talking about today. If I may I will read her statement—she has provided it to me—and also give some information that she would like to share.

Firstly, on behalf of the chamber we would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and speak as a representative of the Maryborough Chamber of Commerce. We are here on behalf of the local business community to provide our perspective on the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026. Our members represent a broad cross-section of small and medium businesses across the Maryborough region. These businesses are the backbone of our local community, but they are increasingly being impacted by antisocial behaviour, drug related activity and repeat offending. For many of our members this is not a theoretical issue; it is a daily reality. Business owners and their staff are dealing with theft, intimidation, property damage and unsafe environments that affect not only their operations but also the confidence of customers and the wider community.

We acknowledge that addressing these issues is complex. However, from a business and community safety perspective, there is a strong desire to see clearer accountability, stronger consequences for repeat offenders and practical measures that improve safety in our town centres. Our position is not simply about enforcement; it is about restoring a sense of safety, stability and confidence so that businesses can operate, employ local people and contribute positively to our community. We appreciate the committee's focus on this important matter and welcome the opportunity to share our insights and experiences to support informed decision-making.

As I said, De'Anne is an owner-operator of a business in town. Some of her main concerns, and where she has been directly impacted, is that she employs, due to the nature of her business, quite a number of young women who unfortunately find this behaviour quite intimidating to the extent that they are fearful to walk to their cars after work or just to go out and get some lunch. She also is concerned about the impact that some of this behaviour has on her business traffic. She is in a street where this happens quite regularly. She is also concerned about that impact to her trade. She has not shared with me about any property damage as such, but there certainly has been an impact to her and the operation of her business.

CHAIR: In terms of the chamber and the business community, forums were held in relation to these issues—I think the Premier attended a forum here—and this bill represents an initial government response to those community concerns. We are back here today to hear from the community about the bill and whether you believe it will begin to address some of the issues brought to the government by the community. Could you comment on whether you support the bill and the designated community precincts?

Ms Clunn: Absolutely. The chamber very much appreciates the work that has been done to date and also the opportunity to be at the table to be able to contribute to those discussions. As I said, we hold a number of events and we are in contact with our members, and this has been a hot topic of conversation for some time. It is a very emotive topic. As a chamber we are very committed to working together as a community to form the solutions. We support this bill. We see it as a positive step in the right direction. We also acknowledge that perhaps it is not the only solution—that there are other things that need to be considered.

CHAIR: We would acknowledge that as well.

Ms Clunn: It certainly is a step in the right direction and we do appreciate the consideration.

CHAIR: We look forward to your continued feedback and the laws that are necessary to protect your community.

Ms SCANLON: Thank you for coming at short notice. Yesterday we heard from support services—and we have also read this in the submissions—that they do not feel like they have the resources they need to deal with some of the underlying causes of some of this antisocial behaviour. You might be aware that in some areas in Queensland there are safe night precincts which are around harm minimisation and they actually have support services embedded in them, as well as additional police powers. This bill does not do that. Does that concern you? Do you think appropriate support services should be embedded within this framework?

Ms Clunn: As I said, I think this is a multifaceted problem. The behaviour is one thing and the causes of the behaviour is another, so therefore there are a lot of things to be considered here. Obviously, this bill is addressing one part of it, but I think there is still a lot of work to do—a lot of consultation and a lot of coming together as a community to solve some of those other issues that are contributing to this problem.

Ms SCANLON: Does it concern you as well that, without doing that, this might just displace people from one area to another?

Ms Clunn: That is a possibility. I know this issue is not just solely concentrated on the CBD. There is another business precinct in town that we are in communication with that also is affected by this behaviour. I do not know whether moving on is the solution, but I do not have that background or expertise and that is why it is so important and critical that everybody is around the table and able to contribute. People have different understandings of this issue. As Michelle said, we are compassionate people and we understand some of the challenges that are facing the people who are demonstrating this behaviour. Does moving them on solve things? I am not sure but it is part of the solution. It certainly may solve the issue of people feeling unsafe and the impact to their trade.

Ms MARR: Thank you for stepping up today. We appreciate you being here. You did say that it is important to work together as a community. We spoke yesterday at another forum about the perception of what is happening in your CBD or other areas makes people feel unsafe and not want to go there. That obviously affects the economy of your businesses and whether they continue on into the future but also community safety. As a government, we have listened and we are providing legislation for you to consider. I have so much respect for any chamber of commerce because you do great things for the community. Once this becomes legislation, how will the community and the chamber work together to make sure you get the message across to people that it is okay to come into the city now because we have legislation to assist?

Ms Clunn: You are right. For a chamber, this is a delicate balancing act. We are here to listen and advocate on behalf of our businesses, and this is a very emotive but real issue for them. On the other side, we work very closely with our economic development teams and state development teams because Maryborough is a great place and we want it to be that way. We do not want this issue to define it. We are trying to balance in those conversations with our businesses—yes, this issue is impactful, it is emotive and it is very real, but at the same time we have to work together to be able to put solutions in place so that it does not define us as a town. At the end of the day we still want to attract businesses and therefore build our local economies.

Ms MARR: So you believe this will give you the opportunity to build faith so that people will come back?

Ms Clunn: I think it is a step in the right direction. As I said, we are fully supportive of this bill and we appreciate that it is being considered and that there has been a consultation process around it that we have been invited to. However, we still think it is one part of the solution and that there are others that also need to be addressed.

Mr BUTCHER: I want to follow on from your conversations around the work the chamber does and the fact that a lot of businesses in town are part of the chamber, which is fantastic. Has the chamber done any modelling or work on how many businesses have been physically affected or broken into? Have any of those statistics been done by you, the council or the police?

Ms Clunn: No. A lot of it is just conversation; we have found that is what is needed because of the emotion. Businesses need an opportunity to be able to vent. All of our businesses are owned by compassionate folk who love their town and community. It is a topic that is hard for people to bring up because on one side they do not want to be seen to be heartless and not compassionate about some of the people who are demonstrating these behaviours, but they also want to be able to run their business. It is very emotive, particularly when it impacts them directly and how they can earn their living.

No, we have not done any data. I do not think sending out a survey is probably warranted in this sort of situation, but we have certainly been out there talking to businesses directly and listening to their stories.

Mr BUTCHER: I am just trying to get around where the districts are going to be with the new legislation moving forward. As a chamber, you are going to have some in one area and then you will have some that are not. As we were talking before, it is moving the problem somewhere else, so how does that affect those other businesses that you have to continue to represent? How will that work with you as an overseeing body helping set this up to find the right places to put them?

Ms Clunn: Hopefully, we will be part of that conversation and that strategy development from the outset. We would certainly be consulting. If there was any talk about moving things on—whatever that looks like—it certainly would be a conversation with us and with anyone who may be affected by that move to get their thoughts on that and then we would hopefully have an opportunity to feed that back.

Mr BUTCHER: So you have not been consulted by the government about any areas at this point?

Ms Clunn: Not at this point, no.

Mr BAROUNIS: Thank you, Michelle, for attending this morning and your feedback in your position. I do not think there is any other person more suitable to know what is going on with the businesses in town. When we move into the next stage and this bill becomes a law and the CBD feels safer, there will be more people coming forward and wanting to lease the empty places. At the moment we have a lot of empty shops in our CBD and they will have some confidence that they can make a substantial living, and we know how important that is for the small and family businesses, the owners and their staff.

Ms Clunn: Absolutely. As I say, it is a balancing act for us. We work very closely with local government agencies and state government agencies around economic development. It is a very emotive issue and very, very real. It perhaps detracts from the attractiveness of a business locating to this region and this is an amazing region. We have amazing businesses that have been through a lot with floods and things like that. It never ceases to astound us at their resilience in being able to bounce back from challenges. We do not want this to define us and that is why these steps are so important. It is a step in the right direction to be able to remove that from our town so our town can shine and be attractive to any potential developers or business owners who want to come and do their trade here.

Mr BAROUNIS: We are looking forward to seeing more activity in our CBD.

Ms Clunn: Absolutely. It has a lot to offer.

Ms SCANLON: I want to follow up on a question we asked some other people before. Do you have any concern around police resourcing, particularly given that an element of this bill will inevitably mean police have to spend more time on other offences rather than the ones that your members are probably reaching out to police on?

Ms Clunn: It is such a difficult situation. I would never sit here and want to bag our police officers. They do a fine job and their resources are very limited, but it does not negate the fact that there is some frustration. I have heard stories about people who will not drive with their small children past a toilet block coming into the city and there is a police station a couple of blocks down the street. We understand that police cannot be everywhere, but a police presence would perhaps allay some of the fears and that feeling that businesses are not being attended to in expected timeframes by police. It is a difficult situation and as I say I understand their challenges. I understand that there have been increased foot patrols and that businesses have noticed that and it is appreciated that that has occurred.

CHAIR: That is certainly part of it. Much has been made about police resources and priorities and stretching resources and whether or not they will be able to deal with these matters and whether there are support services around if they move people on. Police will still have the power to arrest somebody who is behaving in a violent manner, but now under these laws if it was a designated community or business zone they could then issue a banning notice so they cannot go back to the area where they were causing the problem. Police also have the ability to refer people to the support services that they need, and they regularly do that. Do you have confidence that the police will be able to use these tools in this bill to better serve your community?

Ms Clunn: It is certainly our hope that that would be the case. Moving them on may not necessarily mean that the behaviour stops. It could be a deterrent. I think that is something we are yet to see, but we certainly believe it is a step in the right direction.

CHAIR: I guess the point I was making is that if police see trouble they are not necessarily going to move it to another area; they will deal with that issue as well. It is not just moving them on.

Ms Clunn: Definitely. I think there is an impact to safety here and there is a heightened concern around people's safety—the safety of their staff, their customers and the general community. It is certainly very welcome that the police will have these powers and will be able to arrest and remove.

CHAIR: These laws were brought in after feedback from police, too, I can tell you. Member for Gaven, we have one minute if you have one last question.

Public Hearing—Inquiry into the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on
Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill

Ms SCANLON: Does it concern you that an element of this bill is against the police advice? Five former police commissioners backed in drug diversion laws that this bill would wind back. Do you think it is concerning that we have a bill in parliament that is against the advice of five former police commissioners?

CHAIR: Just to be clear, that is in relation to the drug element of the bill and not the move-on power.

Ms SCANLON: Yes, but it is still part of the bill.

Ms Clunn: I am not sure whether I am quite qualified to answer that question.

CHAIR: Well done, Michelle. We either get tough on drugs or we go weak on them.

Ms Clunn: I think any law against drugs is a good one.

CHAIR: That is a good comment. We will leave it at that. Thank you very much. That concludes the time for your appearance. We appreciate you being a voice for your community and coming before us today.

Ms Clunn: I appreciate your work.

BATES, Ms Nancy, Mary Inc.

CHAIR: I invite you to introduce yourself and the capacity in which you are appearing and to make an opening statement to the committee.

Ms Bates: My name is Nancy Bates. I have lived in Maryborough for getting close to 60 years. I represent Mary Inc., I have previously been the editor of the newspaper here and I have been involved in many projects around the city, on a voluntary basis as well. Mary Inc. is a community organisation. We have more than 100 members from all facets of life. Many of us are retired executives, businesspeople, teachers, lawyers and we have quite a few ex-media or current media types involved with us too.

CHAIR: Can you share with the committee your experience with crime and antisocial behaviour in the community? You said you have been around this community for close to 60 years.

Ms Bates: Since 1970.

CHAIR: Have you observed that criminal behaviour and antisocial behaviour have got worse over the past decade or so?

Ms Bates: I think that goes without saying. Maryborough is particularly vulnerable to this rough-sleeping tsunami that has spawned a lot of the antisocial behaviour. It has washed out of the homeless crises. People are taking advantage of the sympathy that is out there for the genuinely homeless and they are trading on it in a big way. It is not the genuine homeless but the addicts and homeless by choice, and we know they are there, who have taken the opportunity to opt out and are spending welfare on drugs and alcohol instead of paying rent or electricity. In many cases, they are unable to rent because they are blacklisted as incapable of sustaining a tenancy because they have trashed everywhere they have been.

Our beautiful city is vulnerable because it has a compact city centre, as you have already noted, and it is flat. It is very easy to walk around with stolen trolleys full of goods. It has a generous soul and offers free food, free clothing, free basic necessities and plenty of nooks and alcoves where you can set up camp. We know the problems are widespread, but in Maryborough the compact nature of our city is encouraging the unhealthy and dangerous congregation of threatening, offensive, arrogant and abusive vagrants.

Maryborough's council and volunteers have been working hard for the last 40 years to repurpose the city so it does not fall into decay as traditional retail areas have around the world with changed shopping habits. In the 1980s we recognised the value of our heritage and we created a special ambience to attract tourists, commercial businesses and social activity. We added the Mary Poppins promotions and the Mary Ann steam train, we have the military history with the John Meyers museum, the Gallipoli to Armistice trail, the Mural Trail and the Golden Dunny, built by passionate citizens who want the inner city to flourish. We campaigned to get free RV parking in the inner city to support businesses. The council has also invested heavily and has been very supportive of these moves. With the renovations of hotels and other businesses beginning to happen, people were again drawn into the city. Visual and performing arts began to flourish. Quality inner-city living, which is a vision of creating a green village era in Maryborough's history, was fast becoming a reality.

Public Hearing—Inquiry into the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill

We have other projects in train but we are disheartened. We are actually quite heartbroken because a safe city is a bedrock of revitalisation. In COVID, we saw housing shortages and the era of rough sleeping in streets and parks by people with addictions and mental instability who are preying on sympathy for the homeless and destroying the ambience that we have so carefully built up. In the words of Premier David Crisafulli, Maryborough is being held to ransom. We agree with those statements and we agree with what is planned in this legislation because we do not deserve to see our city trashed by rough sleepers.

Only a couple of problem people are from Maryborough. Dozens have come here from the Sunshine Coast, are nearby citizens or are from Charters Towers, Mount Isa, Alice Springs and further afield. We have had abusive, filthy and foul-mouthed vagrants threatening and terrifying tourists and residents, young and old. People have been frightened and driven away from the inner city. You already heard how there is constant chatter about it being unsafe in Maryborough now. We could give you hundreds of examples of why we want satisfaction and we hope it will come with this legislation. We want to reclaim our city.

Greig Bolderrow, who is here today, is a committee member and a great colleague. He is in disbelief at his experiences when guiding tours through our Gallipoli to Armistice Anzac memorial in Queen's Park. Almost every tour group, often made up of schoolchildren or groups of visiting senior citizens, are subject to loud abuse invariably laced with the c-word from gross individuals using the park. From social club conversations, as I said, people now say they are avoiding the inner city because of these problems and behaviours. Our volunteers at the Cistern Chapel, with its Golden Dunny, have had alarming experiences from lurking vagrants on the Town Hall Green. We know of a hairdresser with clients who were too scared to come to town. As we heard before, she has set up in her own home. Her clients have returned there as they feel safe. They did not feel safe when she was in the inner city.

Rough sleepers gathering at night in places such as St Paul's church grounds, where they are still going, are a problem for businesses trying to open beyond 5 pm. All night-life in the city has been affected by this. We desperately need these rough sleepers prevented from camping and congregating in the inner city, which is fairly well defined, in our parks where children play and come across syringes and where anyone bordering the areas is subject to screaming at night. There are lots of other hotspots. If you want to know about them then I can tell you about them. We need a serious look at the service providers who are believed to be encouraging vagrants to hang around in Maryborough so they can build up a client base.

Please do not say that the problem is complex. We pay our governments, on all levels, pretty well and we pay you to have the courage and intelligence to fix complex problems, even if the solutions are unpopular in self-righteous areas. Please do not talk about human rights as an excuse. The rights of the majority and the viability of a proud and well-loved city should take priority over the rights of individuals who have come here and are trashing our city because of their self-inflicted problems. Please toughen our laws. I thank you for this legislation, but we want it to quickly provide rehabilitation or mental health centres for people who are clearly incapable of surviving on their own despite the questionable services that are said to be provided. We need these appropriate laws to deal with those who have rejected the basic principles of civilised society.

CHAIR: Thank you for appearing today on behalf of your organisation. As I have said to others, voices such as yours inform this sort of legislation. I sense a great deal of frustration from your evidence. Do you feel as though Maryborough has received its fair share of resources and legislation over say the past decade to deal with issues such as this?

Ms Bates: I think they have crept up and it is always been, 'These poor people', 'These poor people,' but it has become far more than that. There is a message out there to say, 'Come to Maryborough because it's a neat place to be. You get everything provided, you can hang around, it's easy.' That is definitely a factor. I know prisoners being released from the prison out here want to go to Maryborough because they have heard it is a great place to be. At the moment, the prison has totally stopped dropping anyone in Maryborough who does not come from Maryborough. Even Hervey Bay people are taken back to Hervey Bay. The others are put on a train or a bus and sent back to where they came from. But the word is out there that Maryborough is a great place to come and behave like this.

CHAIR: I note your focus on rough sleepers. This bill is related to behaviour. Can you comment on how behaviour coincides with that, from your perception of the behaviour?

Ms Bates: I understand that the bill is going to give us the ability, with the council, to declare areas where there is no rough sleeping.

CHAIR: That is not the intent of the bill. The bill is intended to focus on behaviour. If a person is sleeping in a tent in a park and is not creating a particular problem with their behaviour, this bill does not deal with that. Other council by-laws might deal with that. This bill is about community safety and behaviour. Do you welcome it as a step in the right direction in relation to community safety and behaviour?

Ms Bates: Absolutely, as long as there is a rapid response when these behaviours are occurring in town.

Ms SCANLON: I want to take you back to some of your original comments. As you would be aware, these laws just allow a move-on direction. It does not actually treat the underlying cause. There might be different people who have different views on how to treat that underlying cause. Do you think this may cause a problem if it just displaces that problem or that individual who might be exhibiting antisocial behaviour in our communities? They might be moved from the city centre but they have to go somewhere. One of the complaints made by other areas was that, when some of the councils have issued move-on directions, that has just meant that those people are now in the suburbs and in communities and are exhibiting that same antisocial behaviour because the underlying cause was not treated. Do you have any concern around that and do you think there should be sufficient support services or further law reform to deal with those issues?

Ms Bates: I think there should be some attempt to get people back to where they came from because, as I said, we are not dealing with Maryborough people here. As far as moving on is concerned, the problem is the congregation. I just spent a week in Brisbane and I walked around and felt quite safe at night. Sure, there are people setting up to sleep in the streets at night but the behaviour is not threatening. That is not what we have here.

Ms SCANLON: I want to pick up on that. The laws that we have apply statewide. Do you think there is something particular that is happening in Brisbane that is different to here in terms of the response?

Ms Bates: I understand the actions at Musgrave Park were related to congregation. Congregation of people rough sleeping is causing massive problems in some areas here. Those areas are usually ones that are frequented by children. A lot of people are being confronted in a pretty awful way. I do not think this is a civilised society's response to date.

Ms MARR: Thank you for being here today. I can hear the passion in your voice so it is very relevant that you are talking to us today. We are taking this through a lot of regional Queensland and other places. As you would know, Maryborough is not the only place that is dealing with this antisocial behaviour. It has come about really as it has not been dealt with for such a long time that it is progressively getting worse. We have made a commitment to keep the community safe and that is one of the reasons, through consultation with your people and others throughout Queensland, we have come up with this new legislation. I want to take you back to where you said that safety is the bedrock of the city and that you have been held to ransom. Do you believe that these strong laws, these actions that we are taking, will be a start to making sure you can recover your business community and the safety that you had in Maryborough?

Ms Bates: It will be a start, but I do not believe the state government alone can do this. I think it needs council action and it does need federal action in relation to some federal services that are being exploited here.

Ms MARR: Thank you. You are right. All we can do is provide you with the legislation. I do want to say congratulations to Maryborough because all of you in the room seem to be working very well together to try to make a solution for your city. Hopefully, the state government can assist you with that. It is a great room of people.

Ms Bates: Thank you. In relation to the previous comment, we have not taken the highlighting of this problem lightly. It is something we had to consider because the last thing we want is to send a message that there is something wrong with Maryborough. We have worked for 40 years with a lot of passion, a lot of volunteers and a lot of private investment as well as council investment and we are busy selling this image of Maryborough. We do not lightly turn around and say, 'There's something wrong with Maryborough.' We are not happy to paint it in a bad light at all. I am hoping that with our media contacts and other contacts, as soon as you guys start the ball rolling for us, we can send a message out to say Maryborough is wonderful again.

Ms MARR: We hope you can, too.

Mr BUTCHER: I wish to dig a little bit deeper. You said before when you were in Brisbane you actually feel relatively safe because even though people are sleeping in the streets, they are not creating problems. The difference between Maryborough and Brisbane is obviously Brisbane has a lot of support services for those people in those communities and really support them and work through their issues and mental health. In regional Queensland that becomes very challenging. Do you feel that the support services here in Maryborough for those people—I know you said before that some of them have serious mental health issues, they do not know what they are doing et cetera. Do you believe that a lot more support services need to be here in Maryborough to make sure they can support those people as they need it so they are not getting to the point where they are engaging in antisocial behaviour: yelling, screaming, attacking? I did hear you talk about all the information you have about people moving here. Is there enough of that social network around Maryborough, or should there be more to support these people?

Ms Bates: I think there definitely should be more. The resources we have here have been very busy as a result of the committees that the Premier set up. He was at the first one. We heard at the other one that some of the social services have been around and had offered accommodation and resourcing to all of these people who are causing problems and 80 per cent rejected it. Two in 10 took up the offer of help and the rest said, 'No, I am happy doing what I'm doing.'

Mr BUTCHER: Where did you get that information from?

Ms Bates: The previous committee meeting. It is in the minutes of the previous committee meeting.

Ms SCANLON: It is not publicly available.

Mr BUTCHER: That is not publicly available.

Mr BAROUNIS: Thank you for coming to let us know your views and your thoughts today. I would like to ask you about this behaviour we are facing here. It came to my attention back in November 2024 after the state election how important it is for the small CBD area in our community. Of course, since then we have done quite a few things to make the situation better and I believe there will be more coming because the aim is to make sure our community is safer. In the past we had some issues with some tourists coming to town who had to leave because they felt threatened. I would like to ask you your thoughts about this antisocial behaviour. How much of an effect has it had on tourism and also the safety of your volunteers?

Ms Bates: As I said, we worked hard to get the grey nomads here. We have a lot of them coming now. Some of them have put on social media, 'Don't come and camp here because it's dangerous. There are people here abusing us.' How bad is it? We have had tourists come to the Cistern Chapel saying they wanted to go into Queen's Park but they felt it was not safe because of the people who were wandering around swearing, having episodes or just behaving in a confrontational manner. Our beautiful Queen's Park is heritage listed and is stunning and they felt unsafe to walk there in the daytime. It should be a place that we can frequent at night and feel safe.

CHAIR: That brings to the end the time allocated for your evidence today. Thank you for speaking on behalf of your community.

SANDERSON, Mr Daniel, Councillor, Fraser Coast Regional Council

TRUSCOTT, Mr Paul, Councillor, Fraser Coast Regional Council

CHAIR: I acknowledge the presence of the member for Lytton, who is before us today, as well as two previous local members. Welcome, councillors.

Mr Sanderson: I am a councillor for division 4 of the Fraser Coast Regional Council, which is the area we are in today.

Mr Truscott: I am the councillor for division 3 of the Fraser Coast.

CHAIR: What area does that take in?

Mr Truscott: The western and northern area of Maryborough.

CHAIR: I invite you to make an opening statement to the committee and we will move to questions after that.

Mr Sanderson: Thank you. The Maryborough CBD precinct sits within my division. I understand and share the community's deep frustration regarding ongoing antisocial behaviour in the CBD. I am a lifelong local. I was born and raised in Maryborough. I have seen the city at its best and at its most difficult. Based on that lived experience, it is important to state plainly that the antisocial behaviour currently impacting the CBD is not primarily driven by people who are genuinely experiencing homelessness. The predominant drivers, I believe, are the use of drugs or other intoxicating substances and the behaviours that flow directly from that.

If we are serious about improving safety, then we must be equally serious about the consequences. Effective responses require clear, enforceable measures to manage behaviour that places others at risk. Queensland Police must be supported with appropriate and proportionate powers to move individuals on when they present a danger or threat to the public. This is essential to restoring safety, stability and confidence in the city centre.

Council's role in this space is limited. Council staff do not have the authority to move people on or address criminal behaviour. We have had many situations where we have had to seek police assistance to clear out public spaces for community safety and we have actually had to pay for it at times. That is not something the community fully understands, and I say that respectfully. Thankfully, we have been addressing some of those issues locally and council continues to work with police and state agencies including providing CCTV footage when requested. We have consistently called for increased support in housing, mental health and addiction services as these are key underlying contributors to the behaviours being observed.

I do thank the state for taking steps towards finding outcomes for the situations we are facing here and elsewhere. I look forward to seeing how this bill that has been proposed will make a positive impact in the community we serve. The feedback I receive from residents is that offenders are still not receiving the consequences that match the seriousness of their actions. Hopefully, that disconnect will be addressed.

I will finish by saying that I firmly believe in this city—and you have heard that this morning—and its future. You probably will not find anyone more passionate about this city than me. Addressing these issues properly, firmly and lawfully without overreach is critical. A safe community does build pride, it attracts investment and drives long-term positive change. This is a serious challenge, but one we can and must overcome together.

Mr Truscott: Good morning. We extend the apology of our Mayor, George Seymour, who is not able to attend this morning and appreciates you being here in our region.

Since some years ago we have been seeing a noticeable increasing level of antisocial behaviour in our community. It affects how safe people feel walking down the street, going to the shops or simply living their daily lives. My own wife has on more than one occasion had to take refuge inside shops and wait with staff until it was safe to leave directly due to antisocial behaviour from individuals with serious mental health issues or intoxication or both. I have personally witnessed people in our streets in fear. I have personally had to step in and try to de-escalate situations. That behaviour should not be normal anywhere, let alone here in a beautiful regional community like ours.

I do want to acknowledge something positive. When the illegal smoke shops were shut down in late 2025 we did see a decrease in antisocial behaviour. When the police taskforce was deployed for a period in late 2024 we also saw an immediate improvement. I believe we already know something important: when enforcement is visible, behaviour changes. From a local government perspective we

deal with this all the time. We can put rules in place like no dogs on a beach, for example, but if there is no ranger presence people simply ignore it. The same principle applies here: if there is no visible enforcement, no consistent consequences, then the behaviour continues.

That brings me to the bill. I welcome the idea of designated areas and coordinated responses. In theory, bringing agencies together to focus on a problem makes sense, but my concern is this. Please do not let the bill become a well-intentioned framework that lacks real, on-the-ground support and impact. We do not need more meetings about what should have happened at the last meeting. We need visible action and we need people on the ground. We need clear consequences for those who choose to act without regard for others and the courts to support those consequences. At the end of the day policy alone does not change behaviour; presence and enforcement should.

I believe we are seeing a shift not just locally but broadly where personal responsibility and regard for others is declining. More people are asking, 'What's in it for me?', rather than, 'How do I contribute to the community around me?' As that shift continues, these issues become more frequent and more visible. Government has a role to play in setting the tone here as do we all. Part of that includes getting the balance right. Human rights are important—absolutely—but the word gets thrown around a lot. When someone is actively harming others or creating fear in public spaces we need to be careful that the rights of the offender are not being prioritised over the rights of the victim and the broader community's right to feel safe.

An issue I would like the committee to consider if it is possible is the correct use of liquor licences. We are seeing situations where venues hold liquor licences but are not operating in line with the original intent. Basically, they keep liquor licences to operate cheap rooms for rent, but they do not actually have a public bar. Instead they can become environments where unsanitary conditions and illegal behaviour are encouraged. It is either a loophole or at least a gap and it is something that deserves closer attention.

I also want to be clear about something else: antisocial behaviour and homelessness are not the same thing. They can overlap, but they are not interchangeable. We have many organisations and individuals genuinely trying to support people experiencing homelessness and we should absolutely continue to support that work. However, in terms of individuals engaging in antisocial behaviour who refuse help, we need to be honest that there may need to be stronger interventions for them.

Bringing agencies together is valuable, but only if it results in clear action on the ground. There needs to be a strong emphasis on who is responsible for doing the work—not just discussing it but delivering it—because, ultimately, it is the visible on-the-ground response that the community judges us all by.

I would also encourage clarity around the life span of these designated areas and the governance groups. What is the intended timeframe? What does success look like and how do we know when the job is done? Ideally, we would all hope for a future where these measures are no longer needed but, realistically, if the challenges we are facing worldwide continue to grow there is a risk that these structures become permanent without a clear transition plan.

I believe it is important that we build in both an accountability and an exit strategy from the outset, because our community are not asking for more complexity or more meetings; they are simply asking to feel safe—safe for people to walk to their car when they finish work, safe to walk to a public toilet and safe to simply walk down the street and not be screamed at or feel threatened with someone in your face. If you remember one thing from what I have said today let it be this: we know what works—visible presence, consistent enforcement and clear accountability. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, councillors. I note your comments around meetings about meetings achieving nothing. We have brought this bill to the community today as a result of their meeting and their feedback. We have heard the frustration in the room today. How do you see council working with state government in relation to this bill and the designated community safety districts?

Mr Truscott: Council is often made aware of issues quite quickly, I suppose, because we are seen to be the closest form of contact to the community and I think then council relays that information to the state government quite well. My concern around that is knowing that when council approach state government or go directly to the police hopefully there is a timely response and almost a trusted relationship. I know that individuals in council have that with individuals in state and police but a broader approach—if council is calling to ask for help or if one of the rangers is saying, 'We have a group here that we need to attend to,' we can almost get, 'Alright, we are coming straight out to help'. I think that is probably going to be one the best ways that we see it—from that connection.

CHAIR: So police work locally with rangers quite regularly—

Mr Truscott: They do.

CHAIR:—in assisting them and some of the measures in this bill might assist in dealing with the problem in a different way or give them an extra tool in terms of policing when they are called upon by council rangers?

Mr Truscott: That is my hope, yes.

Mr Sanderson: We have a coordinated response. Every time we see or hear complaints from community, it is through a formal channel, as you would expect, and our guys work closely with the police very well.

Ms SCANLON: In the interest of transparency I wanted to ask if either of you have been members of a political party or worked for a politician and, if so, who?

Mr Truscott: I have worked for two members of parliament. I worked for Chris Foley when he was the state member for Maryborough as an Independent member and I worked for Warren Truss when he was the deputy prime minister and the leader of the National Party. I finished in 2016, but I am not a member of any political party and nor have I been.

Mr Sanderson: Same here.

Ms SCANLON: Mr Truscott, you mentioned the fact that there is effectively no point in having by-laws if you do not have a ranger present. I wonder if you can comment on the fact that part of this bill—I accept is not the antisocial behaviour element; it is around drug diversion laws. We had five police commissioners who supported those laws because it created police efficiency to deal with serious matters like assault and matters that we are probably here talking mostly about. Does it concern you that this bill would wind back laws that five police commissioners supported and will no doubt mean that hundreds of thousands of hours of police resources are sucked up in dealing with something that is not what most people here are talking about?

Mr Truscott: I would have to give that some consideration and I realise that I cannot really take a question on notice here. I would be interested to know their comments and their reasons behind that. I am not familiar with their comments. My concern is just wanting to see people safe. That is all I want to achieve, at the end of the day. However we need to do it, I am going to help to get that done.

Ms SCANLON: I acknowledge you may not have seen that element of the bill or the statements. If it were determined that this would create more work for police, would you support the government as part of this bill adding the appropriate police resources to acknowledge that this will involve more police hours to enforce some of the other elements of this bill?

Mr Truscott: I would support more resources to the police, absolutely, across the board in general. In fact, our council wrote to the police minister in November asking for more police resources here to which—no disrespect—I do not believe we have had a response.

CHAIR: You will hear more today. There is more coming.

Mr Truscott: Anything to get more police resources here and for any area that needs it, I support. As I mentioned in my speech, I think more visibility will help with reducing the problems and then enforcement through that.

Ms MARR: Councillors, thank you for being here today. As a former councillor it is refreshing for me to hear that you work with a lot of the groups and the business community in your city so congratulations on that. Councillor Sanderson, in your opening statement you said that you want action and you want more police powers. You mentioned that you want to make sure that the drug-affected people who are causing the issues are managed. The purpose of this bill is to give police appropriate powers to deal with violent and antisocial behaviour. Targeting your particular concerns, how do you think this will not only assist your community but also your council staff? You mentioned the concern you have for some of them having to deal with drug-affected people.

Mr Sanderson: On the record, we have had issues with staff who have been assaulted across the region in relation to these types of issues. Drugs, at the end of the day, are not good. We have seen the effects firsthand—what they do to people and then how they treat others. I think in relation to how we respond even in the general public, having these laws in place does help the police and, of course, the state and local governments to manage that but, at the same time—as we have heard this morning—it is about what happens after. If they are moved out of a certain precinct, how are they managed? I think there are great services here, but are they the right ones that can help the people who are causing these issues? The police have been fantastic. I have worked with them for many years. They have always done a tremendous job with the powers they have. If there are changes to allow a bit more power—not a dictatorship or anything like that—to allow them to address the issue and make sure the person is supported, that is happening and it has happened to date.

Ms MARR: Have you had a chance to speak to any of your council staff about the move-on powers and how it will affect their job if they are supported?

Mr Truscott: No, I have not spoken to any of the individual rangers but I know that they would appreciate it. One of the biggest issues we have is that people believe that council has the ability to just go up and tell people to move on and we get hassled with it all the time. As you well know, we simply do not have the authority to do that. I think any chance for council officers and rangers to have the police with them for that timely response would be greatly appreciated.

Mr BUTCHER: Daniel, obviously we have been asking questions to a few of the people who have presented today in relation to once people are moved on. When the police come and get them, move them and say, 'You cannot come into the CBD,' they are going into other parts of each of your areas. We talk about support services and the need for really in-depth support for some of these people we have heard about today. Are you confident that there is enough of those support services around to support them when they are outside of the CBD? What needs to be done in relation to that, because this bill does not include, at this point in time, how many support services will be needed in each of these set communities to make this work?

Mr Sanderson: At the present time, I do not think there would be specific services for the issues we are seeing. I know that depending on whether—I am not saying young adults or youth are the drivers of these things, not at all. I know that certain services are fantastic. You go to skate parks and local spaces and they are out there helping the community. I think in relation to specific drug related issues that people are then intimidating people doing those things. I do not believe right in that area they are sufficient but, as I said, I do not have the answer. We do hope the state would in relation to that. The way that the problems are managed, they are managed. I do think even at the present time they have settled. I know they are still there, but they have settled from what they were.

Mr BUTCHER: I want to dig a little bit deeper with Councillor Truscott in relation to the liquor licensing. From my understanding, when you get a liquor licence it is a lot of expense and it is a lot of money. I do not understand why you would have an empty place to put vagrants in. Can you tell us about that?

Mr Truscott: It is something that is happening here. As recently as last Friday, one just had their licence renewed and they do not have an open bar. They are only using the facility for accommodation. It attracts situations that do not end well and it is something that I think needs attention. Whether it can be done through this bill or not, I do not know.

CHAIR: At this point it is probably outside the scope of this bill. We have run out of time for your evidence so we might leave that answer there and deal with that in another forum. Thank you, councillors, for your attendance today on behalf of your community. We hope we can work together in solving some of these issues.

We will now move to our community statements session where we invite people to make short statements of up to three minutes on any aspect of the bill, generally not followed by questions. While we will endeavour to hear from everyone who has registered to participate in this session, the committee is limited by time so I encourage everyone to keep their statements concise and to allow those making statements to share their views with the committee uninterrupted. I remind witnesses that the committee is gathering information and is not investigating individual complaints about people or organisations. I, therefore, ask witnesses to be cautious about providing evidence that names and adversely reflects on a person or organisation.

MORRIS, Ms Ann, Private capacity

CHAIR: I invite you to make a community statement.

Ms Morris: I am an active member of the Maryborough Anglican Parish. We believe within our parish that there has been quite a lot of difficulty because there is a certain perception in the community that the Anglican parish is encouraging rough sleepers and drug addicts to use our facilities. It is an interesting fact that for 30 years we have been doing homeless meals and providing a service to the homeless in this community and suddenly now that seems to have developed into being a very bad thing to do—instead of being community conscious and looking after the disadvantaged.

We are aware that the same people are not necessarily disadvantaged or using our facilities. The fact is there has been quite a savage attack on the Anglican Church. It was mentioned in one of the submissions that people want to sleep rough at St Paul's. St Paul's people do not actually want the sleeping rough and they are asking why we do not do something about it. You would be aware that members of a church, particularly a traditional church, are not in a position to, in actual fact, do anything about that except to try to keep it as decent as it can be. What we would like to know is: what is the situation with this bill that is going to enable us to remove the undesirable but still assist the desirable within our small community?

CHAIR: Unfortunately, in this forum the committee is not able to answer questions of witnesses. We are inviting you to make submissions. If you have questions about the bill, I am sure your local member, John, will be able to have a chat with you later on. The committee is not here to report to the community on aspects of the bill; we are here to hear from you, if that is alright.

Ms Morris: Our concern is: will this bill enable us to conduct our normal business with assistance from the Police Service?

CHAIR: I will put it this way: after the hearing we will be hanging around. John will be here and we can address the community in terms of questions then. I am sure John would be happy to do that.

Ms Morris: You are not able to answer any questions?

CHAIR: No. This process is for community statements to the committee. We are able to ask questions of witnesses. Generally in this portion of the hearing we do not. This is a community statements session in the hearing where we invite community members to come up and address the committee and give us your feedback on aspects of the bill. In terms of asking about the bill and how it will operate for you, we are happy to have conversations about that after the hearing. Thank you.

GREEN, Ms Tina, Private capacity

CHAIR: I invite you to give a three-minute statement to the committee.

Ms Green: Good afternoon. I have experience in disability and youth community services over my extended career. The bill I do not believe is going to be overly successful. I believe it is a bandage. You have gone from a bandaid to a bandage. I believe that the bill has not got enough historical background, especially when it comes to people with disabilities. There are homeless who are threatening people who are already at threat of homelessness. That is another sector completely that has not been addressed. This is a factor where people have been aggressive towards vulnerable members of society and got away with it. The law states that these people, because it is their home, are the ones responsible for the damages that happen and the legal factors.

I believe this bill needs a lot more involvement when it comes to the practice of law itself. I believe that you need further one-on-one when it comes to lawyers with clients, but also lawyers have to be made available to those who have been affected by aggressive behaviours. It is all rushed through the system. I have witnessed this too many times when they rush in, they are given a few minutes and they will put it off for a month. They get one hour to turn around and talk to a solicitor. Before it goes to court again, you might have to call another and they get one hour to turn around and discuss the legal matters. It is still not enough to determine what is actually happening with reoccurring aggressive behaviours or menaces to society.

There is also the fact that the judicial system actually has the ability to investigate if they see someone coming through on a continual basis. It is the same old problem, same old problem. It does not matter how many times you have consequences, how increased those consequences for actions are; it is still going to reoccur because the initial problem itself has not been attended to. They are just being pushed through the system. The judicial system actually has records. I cannot remember what you said at the beginning, but the powers have to be allowed in the judicial system to investigate before decisions are made. We need more services. This is something that people have said constantly. We do not have enough services. As such, you cannot explore what is going on and why there are factors that need consequences. You are missing completely before the consequences.

CHAIR: That is over three minutes. I will get you to wrap up.

Ms Green: I believe you are heading in the right direction. I do believe that you are not actually attending to the much wider issue.

CHAIR: Thank you.

REED, Ms Sarah, Private capacity

CHAIR: I invite you to make a submission to the committee.

Ms Reed: I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I want to be really clear about where I am speaking from. I am here as a local community member who has spent over 40 years working in community services alongside people and families living with mental distress, substance use, trauma, incarceration, homelessness and loss. What I am offering today is not theory; it is what consistently happens when policies actually meet real lives. My concern with this bill is not about whether government should respond to harm or antisocial behaviour—it absolutely should. My concern is that the direction of the bill moves Queensland away from approaches that we already know, through strong evidence and lived experience and, as was said earlier, the Police Commissioner and the Australian Medical Association. It is moving us away from approaches that actually reduce harm and improve community safety. There is a clear story being told with this bill that stronger penalties, fewer warnings and a tougher stance will deter behaviour and make community safer. On paper that can look very decisive, but when the story hits the reality of how people actually behave it falls apart.

What happens in practice is this: when systems feel supported and health focused people disclose earlier, they engage and they accept help. When systems feel punitive or enforcement-led, people withdraw; they stop being honest. They do not stop struggling; they just struggle out of sight. They struggle out of sight until problems reappear later as a crisis. That is the point at which costs explode and safety deteriorates. This is why drug diversion matters so deeply. Diversion is not a soft option. It is one of the few points where people who are beginning to struggle, often with mental health, illnesses, trauma, housing instability or violence, come into contact with support, before their lives become entangled in the justice system. The evidence already before this committee shows that diversion reduces repeat police contact, improves long-term outcomes and is far more cost effective than enforcement.

The proposed removal of early warnings and repeated diversion opportunities is especially concerning from a community services perspective. Change is rarely linear. People do not stabilise after one single interaction; they stabilise through time, trust and repeated contact and rapport. When you replace those opportunities with fines or criminal consequences you do not solve the problem; you just kick the can down the road, and when harm eventually does show up again it does so with greater severity, higher cost and fewer options.

The hard reality is this: every time we shift a health related or health-based issue into the criminal justice system we increase cost, increase friction and decrease safety. Police time, as you said, is absorbed by low-level enforcements. Court and SPER carry volume instead of outcomes. Health systems see people later and sicker and individuals start to lose assets, employment options, housing access and trust in systems that are designed to help them. None of this is abstract. Queensland's own data shows that diversion works. Criminalisation does not reduce use, but it reliably increases harm and long-term disadvantage.

CHAIR: That is over three minutes, if you could wrap up.

Ms Reed: As someone who has worked in this community for two decades, my concern is that the bill risks undoing mechanisms that quietly and effectively prevent crisis because those mechanisms do not look tough enough on paper.

CHAIR: Thank you for your input.

SMITH, Ms Carla, Private capacity

CHAIR: If you could make a three-minute community statement.

Ms Smith: I am a new resident to Maryborough. I am very proud of it. I would like to congratulate the headmaster of Maryborough State High School, Nancy Bates. I note both sides of the coin in relation to the antisocial behaviour and Adult Crime, Adult Time and mental health. Our son, as John knows, passed away under Queensland mental health. I believe that they murdered him. That was a few years ago so I understand the mental health issues in our community.

With regard to the antisocial behaviour, I have been abused in the main street—verbally abused and harassed. I went to the police station. They told me to call a 1300 number. I called them. I was very upset. They said, 'No, we don't deal with that,' so I went back to the police and they said I had to do a peace and good behaviour order. I went through all the trauma of the peace and good behaviour order only to be kicked out of court with minus dollars and a lot of emotional distress because it was not a physical entity; it was emotional. It was harassment over many months. This person I believe may have been mentally ill. You have the peace and good behaviour order which does not work and is dysfunctional in the community for mental health.

I will read a couple of things here: the seven-day turnaround antisocial and vagrancy in the public area. Is that in the CBD? I want to know if it is going to incorporate the parks, as Nancy Bates said, and the toilets. At Anzac Park we have showers in there that enable them to make a hell of a mess. I commend the council guys who clean that place up. It is just enabling them. I am concerned that these people who are drug induced and alcohol induced and mentally unstable are in the presence of children. We go to Anzac Park on many occasions and they are harbouring there. They are harbouring right outside the toilets. I had one incident where 30 children were there that day and this person was sleeping right outside the toilets. One, we do not know what their mental capabilities are. Two, we do not know whether there is paedophilia involved, and our paramount thing is the safety of our children in our community and what we expect them to see visually. If you see a violent person in the street, that becomes acceptable. Well, it is not acceptable in our little community.

We have a very high density of severely disabled people in our community and it is a safe environment—well, it was four years ago when I came here. It is not now. Another incident I had was that I was going to turn right, I parked my car just over the line so I could turn and this person just swore abuse at me and hit my car—banged the bonnet. I went to the police. He saw the man. I was very upset, being on my own. The policeman did not convey to me that there was CCTV. I did not know that until after the event.

CHAIR: We have gone past three minutes now. I will give you another 10 seconds to wrap up.

Ms Smith: No, because I have heaps.

CHAIR: I appreciate you coming forward today and giving us your input. Thank you.

SMALLWOOD, Ms Donna, Private capacity

CHAIR: Thanks, Donna. I invite you to make a three-minute community statement.

Ms Smallwood: I am Donna Smallwood. I have been in the Maryborough community outskirts for five years. I have worked in the community sector my whole career. I started off my career in correctional centres as a correctional officer. After that, I continued to work in the AOD and homeless sector, returning to work in the prison's delivering groups for AOD. I have experienced both sides. My belief is that we should be moving away from relying mainly on imprisonment and punishment and focusing on health and wellbeing—treat drug problems, meet mental health needs and treat trauma as the root causes to prevent crime. We should combine treatment, housing and social support with fair supervision to keep communities safer and prisons from getting overcrowded.

CHAIR: Thank you, Donna.

BATKIN, Reverend Cameron, Maryborough Ministers Fellowship

CHAIR: Welcome, Reverend. I invite you to make a community statement.

Rev. Batkin: My name is Reverend Cameron Batkin. I am representing the Maryborough Ministers Fellowship, and I am the pastor of a local community church, the Church of the Nazarene. We want the same thing: we want safer communities and we want people to feel safe where they live, where they work and where they worship. We care about victims of crime. We want justice to be real, not just talked about. As a pastor, I see the other side of this. The ways of Jesus hold two things together at the same time—grace and redemption. Accountability matters, absolutely, but so does restoration and believing that people can actually change.

The expansion of Adult Crime, Adult Time sounds strong, and I understand why it connects with people, but when we start treating children as adults in the justice system we risk missing something really important—young people are still forming, still growing emotionally and physically. As churches, we need to follow the child safety standards and universal principles set down by the Human Rights Commission. I am not sure this legislation meets that standard. If all we do is punish behaviour without changing the story behind it, we should not be surprised when the story repeats itself over and over again.

The changes around drug diversion sit in a similar space for me. Limiting people to one chance may sound like accountability, but most of us know that real change happens when people make mistakes more than once and are given more than one chance. When it comes to expanded police powers in certain areas, once again I get the intent. Safer public spaces matter, but we also have to ask honestly: who feels the weight of these powers the most? It is often the same groups—young people and vulnerable people who already feel on the edge of society. As churches, we are already hearing anecdotal evidence of people being pushed out of the CBD and parks and moved into suburbs. It just moves the problem. We also provide services in the proposed zone of exclusion. I am interested to see how that will impact things and our crime rates.

One of the things that stands out to me in this bill is openly acknowledging tension with human rights, and that should give us pause. At the heart of the Christian story is the belief that every person carries dignity and worth not because of what they have done but because of who they are. We are the people of the good shepherd who goes back for the one lost sheep and the dad who loves the wayward son. Yes, let's pursue safer communities—that matters—but I do not think we have to choose between safety and hope. I do not think we have to choose between accountability and restoration. The kinds of communities that we actually want, the ones that last, are not just built on stronger consequences; they are built on changed lives. As the church, that is the space we are called to live in: to care deeply about harm and just as deeply about healing, to take sins seriously but never to give up on people.

When I look at the communities that are making progress, like the cities of Port Phillip and Toowoomba, it is their people focused approaches led by the community and churches that are winning. Our town has been impacted for years. We have had successive governments offer solutions and seen no real change. We see surges of police and government services on the streets—

CHAIR: We have gone well over three minutes now. In fairness, I will ask you to wrap up.

Rev. Batkin: I will. Sorry, I am nearly done. We do not need stricter enforcement; we need a community-based approach where all levels of government, the community, churches and business owners are all at the same table. We need a Maryborough-shaped solution for a Maryborough-shaped problem. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. That was the last person on my list. If anyone who has not registered would like to make a community statement, now would be the time to come forward.

McPHERSON, Mr Warren, Private capacity

Mr McPherson: Thank you for the opportunity to say my little piece, which is very short. I am a resident of Maryborough. I am also a past president of one of the major tourist attractions in Maryborough, which is the steam train *Mary Ann*. Very quickly, my comment is about access to the QPS. I will give an example. On my morning walk, which I take in the Queens Park area, I came across a person behaving extremely badly and causing damage to a toilet block within the park, which was also mentioned earlier today. A fairly short walk from there is the police station. It was reasonably early in the morning, and it was before the police station opened. I could have called the police line but, quite frankly, something may have happened so I just let it go.

My point is that, while I could not access the police station, I counted 15 police vehicles parked in the front and in the parking station behind. Quite frankly, I find it unacceptable that I, as a resident, cannot access the police at my police station. I may be showing my age, but I can remember when I could go to my local police station and make a report, even at midnight.

Thank you very much for hearing my comments. I am grateful for what I believe is extra police within our area, and I hope that something can be done so we can have better access to our police force. I feel the police line does not get us anywhere. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Thank you, sir.

SHORE, Ms Leonie, Private capacity

Ms Shore: My name is Leonie Shore. I was a little bit rushed to make it here today because I was meant to be supporting someone in a court case, but that was adjourned. I do some volunteer work with addiction recovery. There is a big issue that is going unnoticed. There is a lot happening behind closed doors in prisons and in the cycle that is affecting the whole community's safety. It has really spiked my passion, hearing John speak about everything to do with the homeless and the vulnerable, with the community saying, 'What are you going to do about it?' We need to understand and be educated about what has impacted them.

A lot of these people come from foster homes and things like that, and that has driven them to addiction. There has been a lot of development in neurological psychology as well. What happens to the brain of a long-term addict is basically the same as what happens to someone who is autistic. They cannot produce dopamine naturally any longer. The more that they go into prison unsupported—there are 18 prisoners out of 800 in the Maryborough Correctional Centre who actually get access to Drug ARM, which is a team of 30. There is an 18-month waiting list for those other prisoners to get help. They have been punished to be rehabilitated, but they are not getting that support and help.

Post-prison, they are coming out to a homeless society, being judged and not being recruited. They also have this mental illness that is being misjudged. It is not being looked at as an illness, and it is scientifically proven what goes on in the brain. They are being so unfairly treated. I guess I am coming here as a voice for them as well as wanting to open up the public's eyes as to what these people have been through and that they are actually neurologically impaired. It is really interesting. It changed my perspective on everything. I now have drug addict friends whom I allow to come to my house. I let them talk to me. I support them. I do not judge them. I teach them business skills, so I teach them things that their dad did not teach them. Some of the people I have met come from really broken homes—all different walks of life.

I feel like we need more mental health resources. A rehab centre would be amazing because the prison's overcrowded. They are not getting the help in there. The prison is also suffering from having to spread funding to domestic violence and other things that threaten the community's safety. Some people might find this absurd—and I am a little nervous to say it—but I think an injection room would be of benefit. A lot of people will not want that, but if you actually think about the issue it would create a lot of safety for kids in parks because they would not be tripping over syringes. Parks would be a safer and nicer environment in that respect, and maybe not overcrowded as well.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Shore: I am so sorry. I have so much more to say.

CHAIR: No, that is all right. I hate pulling people up, but I am just trying to be fair. I will give you another 10 seconds, if you want to wrap it up.

Ms Shore: Thank you for your time. Thanks for listening. I really hope that some people can look into this and open their eyes a little bit. These people have been through some hard times.

CHAIR: Thank you for your input and thank you for the volunteer work you do.

Ms Shore: You are welcome. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you to the community of Maryborough. That concludes the hearing for today. I appreciate that you have come out in great numbers to give us the feedback we need to consider as part of this bill. Thank you, and I declare the meeting closed.

The subcommittee adjourned at 11.14 am.