



# ***JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE***

**Members present:**

Mr MA Hunt MP—Chair  
Mr MC Berkman MP  
Mr GJ Butcher MP  
Mr RD Field MP  
Ms ND Marr MP  
Mr PS Russo MP

**Staff present:**

Ms B Watson—Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL 2024**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Tuesday, 3 December 20244**

**Townsville**

## TUESDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2024

**The committee met at 12.15 pm.**

**CHAIR:** Good afternoon. I declare open this public hearing for the community's inquiry into the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024. My name is Marty Hunt, 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 and pay our respects to elders past and present.

With me here today are: Peter Russo MP, the member for Toohey and deputy chair; Michael Berkman MP, the member for Maiwar; Russell Field MP, the member for Capalaba; Natalie Marr MP, the local member for Thuringowa; and Glenn Butcher MP, the member for Gladstone, who is substituting for Melissa McMahon MP, the member for Macalister. This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and 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 criminal jurisdiction should not be referred to from the moment charges are laid against that person until the matter is resolved in court. All witnesses are therefore reminded not to refer to matters before the criminal courts in their evidence. In layman's terms, if you are here today to speak to the committee and if somebody has been charged with an offence in relation to you, perhaps as a victim of crime, you are not permitted to talk about that matter if it is still before the court. If it has been resolved by the courts or resolved by the police, it can be spoken about. If in doubt, ask or seek guidance from the committee.

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 being recorded. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's directions at all times. The committee secretariat has copies of the media rules. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please turn your mobile phones off or to silent mode.

Finally, the committee notes that today's hearing could be triggering for those who have been affected by crime. If any witness today requires a break during proceedings, please indicate. Please also approach the committee secretariat, Bernice, if today's proceedings raise any issues for you. The committee will now invite to the witness table individuals who have registered to speak to the committee. If you have not already registered but would like to, please list your name on the possible witness list by speaking to Bernice, who will put you on the list. In the interests of time, each witness will be offered approximately 10 minutes to address the committee. The committee appreciates your patience in this process. We will do our best to accommodate as many witnesses as possible.

### **TURNER, Mrs Heidi, President, Townsville Chamber of Commerce**

**Mrs Turner:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this significant issue and for holding a public hearing in Townsville—the only location outside of Brisbane to host such a hearing. We commend the government for recognising the importance of engaging directly with our community on this matter. While the chamber is not in a position to offer an opinion on all aspects of the bill, as the independent voice for nearly 400 business members here in Townsville and the wider business community it is our responsibility to highlight the broader impacts of crime on businesses in our region.

Crime has become a significant and ongoing challenge for local businesses. Operating in Townsville is inherently more expensive due to the additional costs caused by crime such as hiring security staff, installing CCTV, lost revenue and repairing premises after vandalism or break-ins. Some businesses have even transitioned to cashless operations as a deterrent.

Just this week a local business was ram raided twice. As they were beginning to recover from the first attack, it happened again. Vacant premises, coupled with high repair costs, further strain our region's commercial property market and economy. In some areas of Townsville antisocial behaviour has made it nearly impossible to lease commercial properties. Businesses are burdened with escalating security costs, frightened staff and challenges in retaining employees. There is no doubt that crime has directly contributed to business closures in our region.

Stolen vehicles represent another critical issue. The repercussions of a stolen commercial vehicle go far beyond insurance excesses. Businesses face costs for new fit-outs, signage, stock replacement, lost trade and increased insurance premiums.

The impacts of crime also extend to employees. When a staff member is affected by a break-in or car theft, employers often lose productivity as employees take leave to recover and manage their personal situation. This disruption, coupled with the financial burden on businesses, directly affects profitability and results in higher costs for goods and services, further increasing the cost of living for all Queenslanders.

In addition, the high cost of insurance in North Queensland compounds this issue. Many businesses have increased their excesses to reduce premiums, leaving them to absorb recurring expenses for broken windows and stolen stock, which comes directly out of their profits. Crime is not a victimless issue. It is causing irreparable damage to the fabric of our community, tarnishing our region's reputation and deterring skilled workers from relocating to Townsville.

We understand from meetings with stakeholders that there is a group of repeat offenders known to police who are responsible for a significant proportion of offences, with some reoffending while awaiting sentencing for previous crimes. This is unacceptable and impacts countless unseen victims.

The chamber supports measures that will restore safety to our region and protect businesses and the broader community. Crime is not just a challenge for individuals: it has profound economic, social and reputational impacts that demand urgent attention. Thank you for considering our perspective. We remain hopeful that this bill will contribute to meaningful and lasting change for our region and beyond.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Heidi, for that comprehensive assessment. How many business members does the chamber have?

**Mrs Turner:** Just under 400.

**CHAIR:** When the chamber gets together is crime a hot topic in terms of how it affects businesses?

**Mrs Turner:** Yes. For the last 12 months crime has been one of our strategy key areas, which it has never been before.

**CHAIR:** Are businesses in Townsville closing because of costs and the fear of crime?

**Mrs Turner:** They absolutely are. Even our president has had three cars stolen.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I am interested in the number of police on the ground through northern and Central Queensland. Obviously businesses are being affected. Can you give us a little bit of information and commentary around police numbers here in Townsville?

**Ms MARR:** Point of order, Chair. I do not believe a member of the chamber can comment on police numbers.

**CHAIR:** Heidi, you can perhaps make a general comment.

**Mrs Turner:** From some of the discussions I have had with businesses that have been impacted, police seem stretched and responses are not particularly swift to some of the break-ins they have experienced. I have only recently spoken to two members on this point so it is not statistical. It is more anecdotal.

**Ms MARR:** Thank you for your time, Heidi. We do know that small businesses have been affected. We have heard from the local community. When you have had conversations with your members, have they commented on adult time for adult crime? Do you think that will be sufficient to help get the worst of the worst off our streets?

**Mrs Turner:** The members I have spoken to have just highlighted their frustration around repeat crime and that kids seem to feel it is a game. It is not a game to these businesses: it is their livelihoods. It is their homes on the line. I hope that answers your question.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Heidi. In the interests of time, I am going to try to keep everyone to 10 minutes. We appreciate you taking the time to address the committee today.

**JOYCE, Ms Jillian, Private capacity**

**Ms Joyce:** Thank you for the opportunity to address you. My name is Jillian Joyce. I am a small business owner in Townsville. I am a mother of two and I am an Army veteran with domestic and overseas operational experience. I have been in business for five years here in Townsville operating a premises for four of those years. In June of this year, due to growth and the desire to serve our community further and expand our reach beyond just the boundaries of Townsville, we finally as a business were in a position to purchase, through a loan, a new car to enhance the delivery of services as far north as Tully and as far south as Mackay. On 8 August, less than two months after that, our car was stolen from my home premises, which is also my company headquarters. An unknown number of assailants entered my home, removed the keys and my husband's wallet, and then proceeded to steal my car. We acknowledged this the next morning.

**CHAIR:** I just want to double-check that this is not before the courts?

**Ms Joyce:** No, it is not. This is a business car. It is important to note that, due to the ability to purchase this car, my small business, which is a sports academy and training business for DVA and NDIS clients, was partaking in its first inter-regional competition. It had a full tank of petrol worth \$150 and it had been packed with \$5,000 worth of equipment that was not able to be insured as it was not in our physically insured premises. The perpetrators of this theft proceeded to drive my vehicle and use it to commit a number of further crimes. The reason I know this is that they continued to post about it on their personal social media pages. These posts were shared with me and caused me a great deal of distress. Due to the fact that it had around 950 kilometres worth of petrol in it, they proceeded to drive it, thrash it, for over 48 hours and I was witness to all of it.

During this time the police were in constant contact with us, doing their absolute best within their power in order to try to retrieve our vehicle. After 24 hours I no longer wanted the vehicle back after seeing video of perpetrators, who did not show their faces, doing drugs within my vehicle. Along with the vehicle keys being stolen, on the key chain were also my business keys and my house keys. Because I had business equipment within my vehicle, I then was at risk of my business premises and my house being further vulnerable to crime. For this reason, that morning was an incredibly stressful morning in terms of arranging the security of my staff within my facility, including young women and young men who were just simply trying to help the community. I spent time securing my house and working through insurance and getting a vehicle in order to service the community I had promised a service to.

I have two children—an 11-year-old and an 8-year-old—who were asleep in their beds only metres from where the perpetrators would have entered and taken my keys. In order to protect my children, they believe that I left my car unlocked and the keys within my car. This was a choice I made to tell them in order to protect them from the fear I now constantly feel on a night-to-night basis.

I am very forgiving of the history of some of these offenders and the reasons they make the terrible choices that they are making. However, they are choices that these offenders are making. The following morning, over 24 hours after my vehicle had been stolen, the perpetrators drove past the front of my property, beeping the horn and revving the car. You can understand the distress this caused me and my children who were still home before school that morning. This is no longer innocent, young offenders doing something because they know no better. They knew the harm they were causing and they deliberately set out to make it worse.

Even though I was insured, it has cost my business over \$5,000 in direct costs and it has cost over \$1,000 in direct costs to my family. It took until Friday, 11 October—I remind you that my car was stolen on 8 August—for me to finally receive a new car through my insurance process. During this time we installed security systems within our home to better protect ourselves. On 3 November, perpetrators entered our property and attempted to steal the same vehicle and enter my home. The video we have of those perpetrators has them holding knives and screwdrivers. We are lucky that we had installed, at our own expense, a great amount of security, and due to the alarm going off those perpetrators fled the scene. However, they left my gate open and I spent hours trying to locate my dog, which was yet another thing.

As I mentioned, I am an army veteran with over 13 years service. I am no longer in the army but I deployed both domestically and on short notice to overseas operations in hostile and conflict environments. I can tell you, with confidence, that I am feeling more unsafe in my home at night than I ever did when I deployed to riots in Solomon Islands. This is not fair. This is not right. For me, I believe that the repeat offenders who are doing this knowingly to cause impact on our community should be held accountable and have consequences for their actions.

As I mentioned, these are choices that they are making. I acknowledge that we need to do better work in our community to improve the choices that these young offenders have so that they do not see these types of actions as choices. We do need to remove repeat offenders with serious consequences when they are deliberately setting out to hurt people within this community.

Furthermore, in the last two weeks I have made the decision to move the physical premises of my business to a different premises due to the security situation. The centre where I am currently located does not have 24-hour CCTV, nor does it have 24-hour security. I am moving to a premises half the size at an additional cost of 20 per cent more than I am paying in order for a higher level of security for my business, given I employ people who would be vulnerable—and my clientele, including DVA and NDIS clients, are vulnerable. Hearing about the risk, several members of my business community—because I consider my clients part of a community—have felt unsafe within the premises, even though this did not happen within my business.

That is my story. I guess I work with the fact that when my car was stolen every second person told me a story about when theirs was stolen, so I believe this is a significant issue that needs consequences.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Jillian. That takes us to almost 10 minutes and you have probably answered the question I had anyway. How old are your children?

**Ms Joyce:** They are eight and 11.

**CHAIR:** How is it affecting them?

**Ms Joyce:** In regards to the car, we tried to change the colour of the car. My son still has moments where he does not want to get in the car because it looks the same.

**CHAIR:** The member for Thuringowa will have a question.

**Ms MARR:** Thank you so much for telling your story. I can see that it was affecting you just repeating that again. Thank you for taking the time. You have made it very clear that you do not think the current laws are working for our community. I did hear that you have wanted the police as part of their (inaudible) to show compassion for our offenders. You did mention that you think these repeat offenders should be taken off the streets, and we have heard that from the community. As part of Adult Crime, Adult Time and this bill, we are also committed to early intervention and rehabilitation programs—but programs that are effective and get results and are compulsory for 12 months. Do you think we have covered what we need to do to make a change for our community?

**Ms Joyce:** I think it is hard to know that any plan is going to be sufficient, but I do think it is important that there is longer term intervention when young offenders leave correctional facilities. I do not have proof of this but, based on the information given, the person who stole my car—the lead person who stole my car—had over I think 65 charges previously against them and had been at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre at least three times already in the past.

**Ms MARR:** These are our serious criminals.

**Ms Joyce:** Those are serious offenders. I do think that for the people sitting in the back of the car, there is a chance for them.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for presenting to the committee today. I will also acknowledge that the member for Townsville, Adam Baillie MP, is at the back of the room, as well as Nick Dametto, the member for Hinchinbrook.

**CARTER, Mr Brendan, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Welcome. Could you please introduce yourself and make the statement that you wish to make?

**Mr Carter:** My name is Brendan Carter. I have been a resident of Townsville for about 36 years. I have also been in business in Townsville for 35 years in the city. I run accommodation in the city centre in Wills Street. I will not take up too much of your time. I do not want to go into all the details, but I will just offer a couple of my own observations with the experience that I have.

We have been broken into about three times. On the first time I would call it like an armed home invasion, where I woke up to 12-, 13- and 14-year-old boys holding knives and battens at my wife, screaming for the car keys. It was a fairly chaotic scene when I got up. It just absolutely struck me and I thought, 'What is happening here?' These were boys aged 12, 13 and 14 and they looked 12, 13 and 14 because they were not big fellows, but they were masked and they had hats on—

**CHAIR:** I will just check that this is not before the courts at the moment.

**Mr Carter:** This is all finished with. This happened a few years ago. What struck me was just the heightened state they were in. It was obvious that they were working on more than just their own adrenaline. I think it is the one thing that has stuck with me in this and I do not see it talked about a lot, although I know everyone is aware of it—the way that drugs and substances are affecting these kids who are performing these sorts of things. I believe that, unless that is really understood and worked on behind everything you do, it is going to be very difficult for you to get anywhere.

The other observation I make—and we were very lucky—is that the kids were all apprehended within six minutes and went through the justice system. That gave us an opportunity to keep an eye on what was going on and to educate ourselves and understand what was happening. We offered to be part of that restorative justice program, and unfortunately it went nowhere. My personal opinion from what I experienced is that it was completely under-resourced. The people who were trying to do something with it just did not have the expertise or the resources to do anything. When we went to be interviewed, it was performed by a 21-year-old part-time university student, which absolutely shocked me. I thought that this was a very serious matter and we had put up our hands to be a part of it and it was quite shocking to me to see how poorly funded and resourced it was. That is the other point I would like to make.

In anything that you do from here on in, there must be money, there must be good intentions and there must be a lot of hard work behind it. You guys know what you have to do. It is in your hands now. You are the ones who have been given the job from the community. Unless there are champions amongst you, unless there are people who are willing to wake up every morning thinking about it, and go to bed at night thinking about it, and work on it 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year for the next four years, it is going to be a hard task. It is achievable but you need good people. We need people with great intentions and we need everyone working together on it. That is all I have to say.

**CHAIR:** Absolutely. That is why we are here in Townsville. We brought the parliament up here to Townsville to present this bill to you and to hear your thoughts.

**Mr FIELD:** Thank you for your time today. I know it is difficult for all victims, whether they are victims of break and enters, assaults or whatever. We have been referring to support for the victims. Do you believe that the current process fails to keep victims informed?

**Mr Carter:** I can only talk about my own personal experience. I must say we were very surprised and maybe lucky that the police officers who were working with us and also the people in the department of prosecutions kept us well informed throughout the whole process. We were never wondering; we were kept pretty well informed. The thing that struck me with the people we worked with was that they were very mindful of us but they were also mindful of the offenders as well. They seemed to have a good balance between trying to look after both sides of the fence. That is just my own personal opinion.

**Mr FIELD:** I ask that from personal experience and others we have spoken to. Some of those people have been let down and it is good to hear that you particularly have had that support all of the way through. It is comforting to know that at least some people are getting that support.

**Mr RUSSO:** Thank you for coming along today, Mr Carter. Did the restorative justice process reach a conclusion?

**Mr Carter:** Yes. The conclusion was that we were told—and it was only one of the boys that was looking at it—that the program did not fit the aptitude. We were just told that it was not going to be appropriate so we left it at that.

I would just like to say, Russell, thanks for what you are doing. I really do appreciate what you are doing. It is good work.

**Mr FIELD:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Carter. We will call the next witness.

**LINDLEY, Mr Timothy, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Mr Lindley, would you like to introduce yourself and make a statement to the committee?

**Mr Lindley:** My name is Timothy Lindley. I am the owner of a security company locally here in Townsville. My background is Defence. I spent 12 years in Defence before moving into the private sector, trying to find some meaningful work. I eventually found my way into security. It gelled because of one key factor: doing something that meant giving back to my community. Now we just seem to be hitting our head against a brick wall. We see the same offenders over and over again. We see the same kids over and over again. I am not just talking about the kids who are stealing cars and breaking and entering; I am talking about kids who are at risk.

We appreciate the fact that the bill is not just about putting kids behind bars but also about putting diversionary programs in place. We really support the bill because of that. These are young kids who do not just say, 'Oh, we're bored.' We all grew up and we all got bored as kids. These kids are completely at risk. Their parents ignore them. We know of instances where parents go out and purchase drugs for the kids and they go home and share them. They partake in the drugs together. That is not a family fact we want to support. We get it because the kids come to us because they have nowhere else to go. The only interaction they have is with our security guards. You do not see that side of it, but that is the side we have to deal with constantly. We see these kids at their lowest point. We want to see them get away from the source of their problems. We want to see them become a beneficial part of the community, where we all want to be together and build a better society. We see these kids going further down the rabbit hole, down the path we do not want to see them go down.

Don't get me wrong: these kids do not fear this. When they post and add their own Instagram tag, they do not fear you, nor do they fear any repercussions. We know them by name. Guards know them by name. We see them everywhere. We watch them grow up. I have heard from many who have come from really poor backgrounds. It kills you. You want to be able to help them but we are not in a position to do that. Our way of helping them is to get them to make better choices and to hold them accountable. Holding someone accountable is one way of supporting kids to go down the right path. It is much the same as holding our society accountable for our actions so we head down the right path. We want the same thing to happen to the youth of this city. Our businesses want this. Our guards want this.

Our guards do not go out to bully them; they go out to support them. We support our community. We understand that we are put in charge by our clients to look after their most important possession—what gives them food on their table, what supports them and their employees. That is what we have been put in charge to support. It is much the same as you have now been put in charge to help our state government to support the rest of us in what we are doing, to support us to be able to walk around safely day to day. We want our guards to walk around safely. It is not uncommon now when you talk to them that straight up everybody has an edge weapon. I do not mean just knives. I am talking knives, scissors and files. A file will go through our support vests.

This is what we see day in and day out. It is nothing new. There is no shock when this happens. There is no shock when we have this interaction with the kids. Sometimes it is great when you get a fantastic response and we are excited. Our guards are not there to bully them. Our guards are not there to say, 'All right, mate, I have to arrest you and we're going to throw cuffs on you.' We do not enjoy that. That is not what we get up in the morning and jump out of bed for. We actually want to have a super boring day. That is our goal. We do not want any of this interaction. We want to high five the kids. We do not want to be fighting our way through it. We definitely do support each one of these points within the bill.

As I said, we predominantly look after businesses. Businesses have lost faith. The first thing they say to us when we ring them and say, 'Hey, mate, I'm sorry to say you got broken into,' is 'Should I bother calling the cops?' We say, 'We need to report it. We need to get some action.' They say, 'What's the point? Nothing is going to happen.' That is the mentality. When you have been worn down that much and see no action, people become inactive. That is where we are at now. That is essentially a process you are going to have to face when divvying this out—that the businesses are also encouraged to take that step.

Yes, it is a process, but it is not about getting these kids behind bars; it is about getting them into a program and helping them to change. It is about getting them in front of someone to be looked after—someone who is much better than their own blood. Unfortunately that is the case. It has to be someone who says, 'My heart is for this kid and I want to see him do so much better.' That is what we see. We see plenty of youth who just need better role models in their lives who can separate them from doing these things.



This adds costs to everything. You think it is just simple broken glass. Simple broken glass means that some businesses have to pay for a guard now to stay there. That is an added cost of being broken into. They now have to pay a glazier after hours to come and put new glass in place. You have to pay for the glass. That is just the process for replacing the glass, let alone what has been stolen. The insurance is boosted because of all of that. Then we do added patrols on top of that. There are added and flow-on costs that do not need to happen.

I did not start this business to be a warmonger and hang off other people's misery. We started this, like I said, to make a difference and to give people peace of mind. That is what we are there to do. We are not seeing that. We have not seen that. I have been in this business for a couple of years now. I have seen a massive decline. We have seen the trend change from the odd car theft to now breaking in and taking it at night, to breaking in during the day, to now carjacking. Nothing is deterring them from what they are doing. The trend is escalating and we need to put barriers in place to stop that. We are essentially wanting to see what comes about from passing this bill.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Lindley. I hear your frustration. After 33 years in policing, I can tell you that that sentiment goes through the Police Service as well. Do you think that by the system not intervening it is actually letting these kids down?

**Mr Lindley:** One hundred per cent. A lot of the time the parents are not helping. I have seen kids who have done something wrong and the parents come past and say, 'Yes, but it's just broken glass.' What? They say, 'They don't know any better.' They know right from wrong. They know that that is not the right thing to do. It is because they do not care and they have instilled that in their child. That is where the intervention programs come in. It affects everybody. These programs need to be invested in that. These kids need to get it from every avenue and it is not just one agency that is going to give a crap. All agencies need to be a part of it. We are not involved in it at any point, yet we are more interested in getting these kids off than many other departments. We do not see any of them doing anything.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Thanks for your time today. We appreciate what you have said. Earlier in your statement you mentioned programs quite a few times. In your line of work as a security guard business, what sort of programs do you think would really help here in Townsville? As you said, there are a lot of different departments and jurisdictions that need to have a go. What do you think would be the best way to get things started?

**Mr Lindley:** You need to have engagement with them but not just to be their friend. I have seen programs where they are just being their friend. I had a previous business where multiple times I saw kids engaged and they had set up a really good program, but their downfall was that if a kid saw their mates then off they would go. What is that? You are not a program; you are a babysitter. You are not going to do something. We need to get programs established to get these kids into school and to hold them accountable to attend. Again, this is not about being strict for the sake of being strict. It is not about being an overbearing parent type of thing. This is about holding them accountable and setting themselves up because that will instil discipline in them. Discipline will get you through life. Discipline is what gets us through the hard work. I discipline myself to do something to get somewhere else. Michael Jordan was not lazy. He disciplined himself to be a basketballer. These kids see discipline with every one of their sports fans and even their musician fans they idolise. They are disciplined in what they do. This is what we need to give to these kids.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Lindley. That is a little over 10 minutes, so we will have to leave it there. We appreciate you coming along today.

**CROSBIE, Mr Ross, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Good afternoon, Ross. Can you introduce yourself and then I invite you to make a statement to the committee?

**Mr Crosbie:** Good afternoon. My name is Ross Crosbie. I thank you all for taking the time to listen to all of us and hear what we have to say. I am a small business owner in Townsville. We do car security. We were lucky to have the Townsville government and the police allow us to have the immobiliser trial here in Townsville. I would like to extend that to the whole of Queensland—it was very successful in Townsville—and maybe extend it as well in Townsville into the new year.

**CHAIR:** Is that a plug for the business?

**Mr Crosbie:** No, it is actually about the immobilising. The immobilisers have been successful in Townsville.

**CHAIR:** You would like to see that across Queensland?

**Mr Crosbie:** I would like to see it right across Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Can you describe how they work, Mr Crosbie?

**Mr Crosbie:** Basically, we are putting a secondary immobiliser into a vehicle so even if they still steal your keys they cannot start your car. They have to know the sequence or the PIN number to start your car. Up to 25 customers have contacted us back again. I have had three who have had their cars attempted to be stolen saying how much peace of mind they have had since they have had it in the car.

**CHAIR:** I appreciate you coming today and letting us know how that trial went. I will leave it at that because we do have to keep the presentations today relevant to the bill before the House. I appreciate you coming along.

**Mr Crosbie:** Thank you.

**DOBBINS, Ms Emma, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Emma, could you introduce yourself and I invite you to make a statement to the committee?

**Ms Dobbins:** Good morning. My name is Emma Dobbins. I am a mother of three children under the age of 18 years. Importantly, I am also a teacher and someone who has experienced youth crime firsthand in Townsville.

I cannot discuss my case at the moment. It was so violent that it has been in court since May, and the police prosecution will continue for at least another eight months because of the violence. However, my QPS victim engagement officer provides regular updates on the progression of the case. I have no rights to attend the multiple court cases to date. At last count, there were 10. I have no rights to the accused's criminal history or what led to the actions on that day. I cannot contextualise or rationalise their actions. The accused has not heard my victim impact statement or my teenage daughter's perspective on how life changed. I will not comment on that bit but I will say that it is the insidious ongoing psychological battle of PTSD that is the daily internal battle.

I chose to move back to Townsville seven years ago, having grown up here and seeing it as a safe, community-based alternative to Sydney. I chose to move to teaching very recently, from a very successful corporate career. I chose to be in state schools, to work with children who often do not have the privilege of accessing private education and need the teacher who welcomes them every day with open arms. I choose to undertake additional trauma studies to help my students. What I did not choose was to be a teacher who sees and experiences firsthand the behaviours and stories of the students that have led to this problem. My PTSD is so significant that I literally felt broken. Apologies.

**CHAIR:** Take your time. I invite anyone who is giving evidence to have a support person with them. That is absolutely fine.

**Ms Dobbins:** I could not get out of my car to go inside school. I had considerable time off school, disadvantaging the school system, my colleagues and my students. Some days I find it too difficult to open the car door so I keep driving until I feel safe. As a teacher, the violence, lack of empathy and complete disregard for other people that I see from children as young as 12 at school is, unfortunately, no longer alarming to myself or my colleagues. Our frontline workers, teachers, GPs, nurses, paramedics and lawyers are all experiencing either primary or secondary trauma from youth crime. This then passes to be generational trauma and impacts their families.

We have a teacher crisis and this is a significant contributor. Schools have become social settings for junior organised crime, frequent violent attacks, the casual use of highly abusive language and a place of rite of passage in gaining crime progression. We can do bag searches at school and find gloves and tools, and it is a rite of passage.

I welcome the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 with open arms, but can we also please address exactly what is leading us to have to introduce such a bill? The impact of offending on victims, to be addressed in the charter of youth justice principles, is important but myopic to the crime itself. In my previous corporate life, we conducted economic impact analysis to establish how a proposed business concept would impact all the parties in a community. This more comprehensive approach needs to be considered when assessing youth crime and what solutions can be implemented to mitigate the impact on everyone.

My children no longer have that lovely innocence of feeling safe wherever they are. The presence of their parent no longer precludes an attack. Attempts at trying to limit their exposure until their brain has better cognition and ability to process such violence is no longer possible. My daughter, who is in high school, undertook a project at school this year about youth crime. Ninety-seven per cent of her whole grade had personally experienced crime in Townsville. My students experience this both within the school environment and out in the community. Developing initiatives within our educational environments that elicit personal accountability, the teaching of empathy and the teaching of options alternative to violence—I implore that this must be part of this much needed bill.

I heard witnesses this morning talking about children being bored. I have violence in my classroom every day. One of my students literally said to me yesterday, after roundhouse kicking someone to the point where they needed hospitalisation, 'But I'm bored.' That was in my science class. That is my problem.

For many, children engaging in crime perceive their actions as victimless crimes with no faces because we are not able to be present. Accountability and empathy are critical elements to the success of this bill. The rights of children engaged in crimes are no greater than the rights of children or adults impacted by the crime. Thank you for your time.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Emma. I appreciate you telling your story. I know how difficult that was for you. I will move to questions.

**Ms MARR:** Ms Dobbins, thank you very much. I can see how difficult that was and I thank you for that. Before talking about the Making Queensland Safer Bill and what is in it, you have identified some other concerns that have been brought to our attention. I can assure you that this is the first bill that we are presenting to parliament but we have identified other areas that we need to improve and that includes in schools. Thank you very much for that feedback. I am not sure how much of the bill you have read. As part of the Making Queensland Safer Bill, we will make the courts open to victims and to the media. Currently, you have to ask to be involved and that is many phone calls, telling your story over and over, and talking to many different people. What we are going to introduce is an opt-out process. You are automatically kept up-to-date, but if you do not want to go to court or be involved in the process then you can opt out. Do you feel, as a victim and given everything you have endured in terms of emotions, that that would be effective in this bill? Would that have helped you?

**Ms Dobbins:** It is a really interesting question because I have had a great team with the QPS. I cannot fault the QPS. They have been amazing.

**Ms MARR:** This is the court system. It opens the courts up to you.

**Ms Dobbins:** Yes. My liaison through the QPS is my liaison through the court. I have a VEO, the victim impact person. They are the only person with whom I have contact through to the court. The QPS is my contact to the court. That process has been good in keeping us up-to-date. However, they are equally frustrated. I would love to submit the emails that they send to me expressing their frustration when we have someone who will not even come out of their juvenile cell to appear and their rights are actually greater than ours. In answer to your question, I think that that is going to be a favourable adjustment. I think that there is obviously a lot more margin for what we can do as well.

**Ms MARR:** Sure. Thank you for your honesty.

**CHAIR:** Members to my left, do you have any questions?

**Mr RUSSO:** No, we are good. Thanks for coming along, Emma.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Emma. Thanks for doing that. We appreciate your contribution very much.

**Ms Dobbins:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** And I agree: the QPS do a wonderful job.

**COSTANZO, Mr Salvatore, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Salvatore, I invite you to introduce yourself and to make a presentation to the committee.

**Mr Costanzo:** My friends often call me Sam. I am a long-time resident. I am one of the rare few who are born and bred and still living in Townsville. I have not been an immediate victim of crime thankfully. However, for the last 10 years I have been an administrator on a Facebook page for my local suburb which covers crime and in that time I have managed to observe quite a lot of things. I have also spoken probably to several hundred victims either via Messenger or in person. Some of these people now have had their car stolen a second time.

Just to refresh some statistics, in October—and this came from the Queensland police crime statistics page—137 cars were stolen in Townsville. In November 153 cars were stolen. If anyone thinks this is a great number of cars, it is. At about 10.30 this morning yet another stolen car has crashed in Townsville which was stolen this morning from my area of responsibility, as I call it, Hermit Park—Sherriff Street. An elderly couple apparently own that vehicle, so that is another elderly couple in Townsville who have now had their car written-off, which happens quite often. This is on top of all of the other vehicles which are driven into the rivers, particularly out the back of Officeworks, and set on fire. This is on average happening once a week where one car was either set on fire or driven into a river.

I have looked at the legislation which has been tabled in parliament. There are some points. However, I personally believe it is not strong enough, with one of the main reasons being that there is nothing in there in terms of minimum sentencing for certain prescribed offences. I understand that murder has a minimum sentence. However, the great deal of crime being committed in Townsville is break and enters and car theft. Unless the focus is on these, none of this is going to change unless you put in minimum sentencing—and we are talking a rolling sentence where if it is the first offence you might get a couple of months, for the second offence it doubles and for the third offence it doubles again. This has, I believe, not been looked at. We have been trying to mount a campaign where approximately, I think, 18 of my members have emailed the Premier's office with regard to a letter of demand which sets out what we think needs to change.

Certain issues have not been discussed or even looked at, and we tried with the previous state government. We tried with the previous police minister. All of this has been completely ignored, so I will bring this up again because this is not the first time that I have been here, and if you think I am jaded I am. I also did 15 years as a reservist in the Royal Australian Air Force, so if there is a jaded person it is right here because what is happening here is also what is happening in the broader defence area where people constantly tell you, 'We're going to review something,' yet nothing happens. Every year it is the same story. You speak your mind and you tell them what the problems are, but nothing changes. No-one wants to know about it. No-one has the guts to change anything. No-one wants to listen. No-one wants to listen to the victims of crime.

Turning to some of the issues, one is drug use. No-one in the previous government cared to look at the drug use. In the last 10 years I will let you know that in a number of the vehicles that I have personally located there has been drug paraphernalia—clip-seal bags, syringes, crack pipes. This has now been going on for 10 years. Police admitted to us at a meeting years ago about the drug issue with juveniles. None of this has ever been looked at as to why it is happening. The other issue is that the adult drug dealers in this town, which again police admitted to us several years ago, use these children and teenagers to run drugs in Townsville and to make deliveries of drugs. I have personally witnessed this—personally witnessed this. Again, I tried to bring this up several times and no-one wants to know about it. Why is a stolen vehicle which is stolen by teenagers then driven by adults and then handed back to children or teenagers? This is a common occurrence and again it is completely ignored. It is even ignored by police, and I will state this: the police know about it and ignore it.

One of the big issues is that these vehicles are allowed to drive around without any police interference for days on end. Some of these vehicles will drive around for seven days without the police intervening. When the police were still operating on the analogue channel, quite a number of us used to listen in obviously. The police were being ordered to ignore these vehicles—ordered on air. Everyone has heard this. A number of people have heard this. It was revealed by local media because they got the recordings.

If the police are turning a blind eye to this situation, they are encouraging this behaviour. If these vehicles are not stopped immediately, these kids get used to driving around doing what they want when they want without fear of retribution from the court system or the police themselves. If these cars are ignored constantly it just simply gets worse. The fact remains that it has got worse because the police

for the last four years particularly in Townsville have a no-pursuit policy on every single stolen vehicle irrespective of whether it is an adult drug dealer or a teenager driving the vehicle. No-one wants to know about it. No-one wants to admit this. The police will not admit this.

There are also severe issues with the police response when you call triple 0. I have tried to bring this up with the previous police minister. No-one acknowledged my complaints about this. I have personally waited, as well as other people, for up to 4½ hours with a stolen vehicle for police to attend, and in that time I have had several vehicles stolen again. I have had to defend myself when criminals turn up to steal that vehicle again and I call triple 0, with no response from police. Recently I had another incident where I called triple 0 when a stolen vehicle arrived with offenders. No police showed up until one hour and 10 minutes later after calling triple 0 three times. The third time they hung up on me and told me that triple 0 is only for life-threatening emergencies and a crime in progress does not warrant a triple 0 call. Unless this government starts focusing not only on legislation but a deep look into QPS and how it operates, nothing is going to change. You can have all of the tough laws in the world, but unless the police are out there doing the job like they are supposed to and not telling off members of the public for doing their job then nothing is ever going to change.

Another issue is that under Campbell Newman's government the 'three strikes and you're out' policy was introduced into housing commission. A lot of these teenagers are living—

**CHAIR:** Mr Costanzo, I have to draw you back to the bill before the committee. That is straying outside of the crime-related issues in this bill, so I draw you back to that. Thank you.

**Mr Costanzo:** It is related in a way, but okay. As I said, it is related.

**CHAIR:** With only a couple of minutes to go, Mr Costanzo, would you mind if we moved to questions, please?

**Mr Costanzo:** Yes, that is okay.

**CHAIR:** Just as a couple of quick comments, I would probably challenge your assertion that the police are ignoring things. There is a police pursuit policy and I would challenge that the police are ignoring it, but thanks for sharing your perspective on those things. I will hand over to the member for Thuringowa for a question.

**Ms MARR:** You said that no-one is listening and that you keep coming to these events and nothing is happening. I just want to point out to you that today's meeting is about a bill that we are putting through parliament this month. This is what this meeting is about. We are talking about the bill to see if it meets the community's expectation of what it wants after what we heard over 12 months of doorknocking this area. This bill has come from listening to the community, and a lot of those people are in Townsville, so I just wanted to bring you back to that. This is not a talkfest that will not have results. This is talking about a bill with strong laws, consequences for actions and looking after the worst of the worst and getting them off the streets of our communities which our communities have asked for. The intention is to pass it through the parliament this month, so I just wanted to clear that up for you.

**Mr Costanzo:** Yes, I understand that fully but, like I said, unless there is minimum sentencing for certain prescribed offences—

**Ms MARR:** And we will take that on board today.

**CHAIR:** Thanks for sharing your views. As there are no further questions, thanks for presenting to the committee. That is 10 minutes now, so we will move on to the next witness.

**WYLIE, Ms Sandra, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Sandra, I ask you to introduce yourself and I invite you to make a statement to the committee.

**Ms Wylie:** My name is Sandra Wylie. I am a victim. I have been, apart from things that have happened in my house—they tried to get in last year through the garage; they broke in twice and had the police—

**CHAIR:** Just a reminder, if somebody has been charged and is before the court, we cannot talk about it, but if that is not the case go right ahead.

**Ms Wylie:** No. Okay. They tried to do that and the police came and got photographs, prints and things like that. I have also had people in the house. One was three weeks ago. They have been in the house and my husband was sleeping in the lounge room. By the way, my husband is ex-Army, he is on a gold card and he belongs to Mates4Mates. He was actually asleep as they came in and I came in the house and interrupted them and they went out through a casement window. I live on an easement which is easy enough to get in.

The other thing is that 10½ months ago just before Christmas I was coming out of the Willows Shopping Centre where Centrelink is and you have to turn left and turn right if you want to get onto Hervey Range Road. I pulled up behind a truck. The truck went out—this was about half past four in the afternoon—I moved up, looked to my right to see if I could turn and the next minute I was rammed. He rammed me so hard—he drove a Hilux; I drive a Colorado, so it was more or less car for car, and I have a canopy in the back—that I could see him in my canopy. He then progressed to ram me three to four times across the three lanes of traffic before the median strip along there, so he kept on pushing me. I had to—

**CHAIR:** This is not before the court either?

**Ms Wylie:** No.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms Wylie:** You will know why in a second. I turned. When I turned so I did not go over the median strip, I had to stop for the red light. He then pulled up beside me, he grinned at me and he went through the red light sticking his thumb up and everything. He then continued across over near where the bowling alley is and he progressed to turn right from there and go along Golf Links Drive and right up to the end to Dalrymple. Consequently, he and his little mate, who stopped at the red light, burnt the car out. I rang for the police and an hour later they still had not come. I have a witness statement, by the way—from a witness to this.

As I was stopped at the red light the lady got out of the car and ran to me. I then put the window down and tried to remember the registration of the car not thinking it was stolen or anything. She came up and asked me how I was and I said I was okay; I was trying to remember the registration. Her husband drove into the car park and came around. They stayed with me for over an hour and a half, including the hour that I was waiting for the police to come. I rang the Kirwan police station and he asked me if I could drive. I said yes. He asked could I drive the car and I said yes. He said, 'If you come around I will take some evidence.' Apparently after they got to Dalrymple and his little friend had followed behind him, they burnt the car out. Consequently, by burning the car out, they burnt the fingerprints out.

I had no backup. When they burnt the car out they burnt the fingerprints and everything. They had been on the road from half past five that morning. They also took videos of the car being in different places and all around town. They forced people off the road. They also threw car batteries through the back of an unmarked police car in Willows Shopping Centre and I was the last on his list. With them burning the car out, they closed the case. They did not tell me, but they closed the case. I would have thought the police would contact me saying they could not do anything for me.

**CHAIR:** What do you mean by 'closed the case'? What do you mean?

**Ms Wylie:** They closed the case; they did not have anything. They did not have any fingerprints.

**CHAIR:** So what you are saying is they were unable to identify the offenders in that case?

**Ms Wylie:** Sorry, I do not believe they did not know who it was. He had been on the road since half past five and he would have done different things going by what I heard. There were different things done previously in exactly the same way as what this car did before he hit me. By pulling up beside me and smiling at me and then going through the red light sticking his fingers up, they formed a pattern. The pattern would have been done before and done after they affected me.

I have had no support. The fellow at Kirwan police station actually asked whether I needed to talk to a counsellor so I said yes. I still talk to a counsellor, but this is the third counsellor at the women's centre. Apart from that, I have had nothing to help me with the consequences of this fellow's actions. I have a husband who, as I said, is ex-military and has a Gold Card. If you know anything about ex-military and the Gold Card you will find that they are under psychologists and psychiatrists, but I just had nothing. What happens to the people like me who still see him in the car and smiling at me? I still drive. When I stop at the lights, I look in the rear vision mirror until I know that the person behind me has slowed down. There must be other people exactly like me who have had this done but there is nothing; there is nothing for me. I want to know what support I can get.

In your bill you are supporting the children. I am 76 and I am sure there are lots of people as old as me and have been pushed off the road or had their car stolen. Because of where I live they arrested a teenager outside my bedroom window at 1.30 in the morning. One thing just happens after another after another. The Queensland government has support for over 65s—it is now 60—to fix up your home with some security and things like that. We have had that.

I have opinions on youth crime. I do not believe you can say that they all come from underprivileged families. I have seen things posted about the detention centre, Cleveland detention centre. We were short of hotels and motels at one stage in Townsville. They posted that at Cleveland they had five meals a day, a gym, their phone and they get all their sheets and towels and things like that taken care of. I do not think they should have the privilege of being able to have their mobile phones with them. I do not believe they should have the privilege of a swimming pool. I believe they have drained the swimming pool because they were trying to drown each other. That is a privilege; the phone is a privilege. Why do they have a phone in a detention centre? If they want to ring home they have a phone that can be given to them in a room so they can ring their parents. They should not have privileges. They have taken away my privilege and they have ruined my mind. They should not have them. Privileges are earned. They still keep in contact with people outside. They get out of Cleveland detention centre and a friend is waiting for them.

They should not be in Townsville. They should be out in the bush where they can have elders and advisers and those types of people to help them. They should learn to cook. They should learn to keep themselves clean and where they sleep clean and things like that. They go home and somebody is waiting with a meal. My fellow went home and had Christmas presents. He did not worry about me.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Sandra, for speaking to the committee today about the impact this has obviously had on you being a victim of crime. The Making Queensland Safer Laws and the bill we have is very victim-centric. It puts victims at the top of consideration when sentencing and also—

**Ms Wylie:** I do not get that privilege because he burnt the car out. I do not get a privilege—

**CHAIR:** I do not know of the personal incident you are referring to and I cannot advise you on that. In relation to the bill, unlawful use of a motor vehicle and some of the offences you have described are included in the bill along with the adult crime increased sentencing. Would you welcome that?

**Ms Wylie:** Increased sentencing? I believe it is about the type of sentence they should have. They have to learn to like themselves in the first place and they have to learn to look after themselves because as soon as they turn 18 no-one is going to look after them.

**CHAIR:** There are certainly post-detention programs; 12 months worth of intense supervision is part of the plan as well. I am running out of time. There being no questions, thank you very much for your contribution. I see how much of an impact that has had on you in terms of that crime and a lot of stories—

**Ms Wylie:** That still does not tell me in terms of this victim statement what happens to people like me. There must be a terrible lot of people here who have been run off the road and been broken into. I have been broken into.

**CHAIR:** I will refer you to Bernice in terms of support and services that are available. She will be able to provide you with that at the table shortly. There are various victim support services and the police are able to do referrals to victim support services as well.

**Ms Wylie:** They do.

**CHAIR:** There is support out there I can tell you. We will do our best to refer you to that.

**Ms Wylie:** When they go to detention centres are they going to be allowed to keep their privileges? Is anything going to be taken away that they have to earn back?

**CHAIR:** What we do in detention is important, absolutely. We have committed to compulsory education and a few other things, which is in the explanatory notes.



**Ms MARR:** You are right. We do expect the detention centre to be just that. Although it is not part of the bill, there is a discussion about the detention centre. I am a believer in—and in talking to Bernice as well—being rewarded for good behaviour. You do not walk in and get everything when you get in there. We are trying to take on board what you are saying. This bill is the start of many conversations that we will continue to have. I want you to have faith in your three members in Townsville. Come and talk to us. Everything that we talk about today is a consideration of how we do better—of how we do better for our victims, and victims are those we are putting first in this bill. We may not get everything perfect at the moment, but there is room for improvement with that and we do have some things coming for victims along the way. Thank you so much for your time. I really do appreciate you have been through a horrible experience. I will come and talk to you later.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Sandra. I acknowledge Janelle Poole, the member for Mundingburra, has just entered the room. Welcome Janelle. I call forward Arthur Burchett.

**BURCHETT, Mr Arthur, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Would you like to make a statement?

**Mr Burchett:** First, I would like to thank you all for this opportunity. I also want to pay my respects to the victims and the victims' families who enter Christmas with the memories of loved ones whose lives have been taken away from them. I think we must always remember that. The Queensland public have spoken and want change. That is what listening to us today is about. We hope that we walk away and realise this is not about politics, it is about making Queensland safe.

I own a registered training organisation and a consultancy business, I have founded a charity this year that I am going to be launching next year and I also drive the public around. I have many conversations and in the last couple of months I have spoken to approximately 500 people. This is one of the key things that I spoke about.

Finally, we have a government that we have elected that have said that they will do something but have implemented it very quickly. The discussions have happened. These are the laws that we need. The only thing that I am concerned about with this is if judges do not hand down what the community is expecting, could we revise it in 12 months, look at it and ask are we getting what the community want and not just putting it in place?

I believe the victims' rights through this bill have been put as the first consideration. Last night I heard something on the news which concerned me: people want to criticise the bill. From talking to many people in the public, we do not care if a 10-year-old still has baby teeth. Adult crime, adult time; someone's life has been taken. I want to say one thing. In 25 years time that person does not come back from heaven, so why should this person be catered for? It should be, 'You have done something, you knew you were doing it.' If someone murders someone, it is not an accident. For me it should be adult crime, adult time, and a lot of people I speak to agree. They cannot wait for it to be put in place.

People mention poor upbringings, but that is an excuse. We all have choices. I grew up in a poor family. If my grandfather beat my grandmother, that does not make me as a teenager want to go out and rebel in life. I make the choice about what I want to achieve in life. Some people say, 'You might have had people around you.' Actually, I was a child of a single mother. I was poor. This is literally the reason I decided I would go out and get a job. I finished year 12. I was not the smartest kid. I did not go to university. I am just an average person.

Just this morning I was talking to someone and said I was coming here. Their exact words to me were, 'Artie, life is life. There should be no parole. Once again, I do not get my sister back. Why do they get their freedom for 25 years?' The big thing for me as just a normal, general person out in the public, is we always wonder whether politicians would get tough if it happened to one of their families. Mr Field, I applaud you for putting your hand up and being elected. We finally have people who are one of us.

I am going to give a couple of examples of what I have actually done in my career. I said I own a training company. Why? It was because I was sick of working for people who turned a blind eye to this industry that just ticks and flicks. I heard before a person talking about the friends of friends, the tens of millions of dollars that have been spent just to accommodate ticking a box. It is not right. I was told once, 'Artie, you must let them come in when they want to, let them do what they want and leave when they want.' My words were, 'Sack me. That is not me.'

I tell every class that I do about my upbringing. I tell them I had nothing. I am not ashamed of saying in public that I had to boil water to have a bath through my whole upbringing and teenage years. My grandmother passed away in 2007 six days before Christmas. I know how tough it is to have Christmas with a loved one not there. I made a promise to her that I am going to make a real difference, and that is why I participate in these meetings and actually say the truth. I am not going to cover anything up.

I had a 16-year-old girl that I employed before she moved away. One day, when I was talking about an honesty session about we get what we put into life, I drove her home that afternoon and she said, 'Can I ask you one thing? Will you sack me if I tell you the truth?' I said, 'No, I'll applaud you.' She said, 'I actually stole cars when I was 14.' I said, 'Let's have a chat. Tell me why.' She said, 'First, I had a falling out with mum, walked the streets and fell into a bad crowd.' I said, 'So what made you turn your life around?' Her reply was, 'Artie, you know what, I went through one of the "joke" courses.'

She was put in a course for six weeks—it was supposed to be a 12-month mentoring program—and she was told she could come and go whenever she wanted. She said she was the only one out of the eight who actually turned up every day. No-one else did. She said, 'I focused on myself and what

scared me was being told I was going to go to a juvenile centre. That woke me up.' I said, 'Look, I am really proud of you.' That girl actually moved down south and has furthered herself and has never turned back.

There was another girl who went to flexi-school. She is a trainee of mine presently. She dropped out in year 10. Why did she drop out in year 10? It started getting infiltrated by, in her words, 'juvies'. Juvies were going to these flexi-schools and, literally, bullying. Bullying is another thing close to my heart. This is where, with the whole talk of change, I believe the government is on the right track. It is not going to be fixed overnight—we understand that—but we can make real change for future generations, and that is what I think we all have to agree on. What we have done in the past has not worked.

Another person I met was a prison warden. She got in my car when I was doing my casual work in the night time. I said, 'How are you going?' She was like, 'Oh, I just hate this. I hope there's a change of government.' This was actually at the start of October. I will remember this conversation. I go, 'Why? What's wrong?' She was like, 'I'm a prison warden in the juvie.' She goes, 'I just hate it. They spit at us and nothing happens.' I said, 'You are joking! Someone spits!' Once again, people have spoken before about Cleveland. There needs to be—and I have heard there is going to be—a focus on education. There is no negotiation.

The last example that I want to share only happened about four weeks ago. I was walking home late at night—2 am. There were a couple of young people and I said to them, 'How old are you?' They were a bit cheeky at the start, and I said, 'What are you doing out at 2 am?' Anyway, one boy said, 'I'm 16.' He had a busted up hand. I said, 'Mate, you need to get an ambulance.' Anyway, I called the ambulance for him. While we were waiting for the ambos, the girls said they were 12 and 13. The ambulance came and the ambulance refused to take him because he was adamant he wanted the girls to go with him to hospital. Anyway, I said, 'Get in a taxi. I will take you to hospital.'

I asked these kids, because that is all they are—kids—'What are you doing?' I told them my story and that made them open up. I feel the real success for some of the training programs is about having genuine people. They opened up and they said, 'We're under state care. They don't care about us. We can do whatever we want.' It came and hit me straightaway that what is missing is discipline. What is missing is accountability. These kids were actually reaching out. They were shocked that I would actually put them in a taxi to take them. I was shocked, thinking, 'Hang on a second, why hasn't the state got someone here looking after them?'

**CHAIR:** Thanks, Arthur. That is 10 minutes. Are there any quick questions for him?

**Mr FIELD:** I have a comment. It might not necessarily be quick. Thanks for your support. You know the reason I am here. These laws, when they are passed before Christmas, will not be perfect. There will still be people saying they are not hard enough; others will say they are too hard. No matter what they are, they are better than what we had before. I know for a fact—and a lot of other people do as well—that we need change. If these laws stop one kid from stealing one car and killing somebody, they have done their job. It is as simple as that. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thanks, member for Capalaba. Thanks, Arthur, for your contribution. I will now call Dr Sarah Leah Kleinman to the table.

**KLEINMAN, Dr Sarah Leah, Private capacity**

**Dr Kleinman:** Good afternoon. Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak to you. I would like to, firstly, acknowledge all the trauma in this room. You are very, very brave. Thank you, from all sectors of our community, to not just the victims but everyone who has presented here today.

I am a local GP. I care a lot about Townsville. I look after everybody in Townsville. I have also worked in the Townsville University Hospital mental health service, including the Child and Youth Mental Health Service, and I have been a foster parent, so I would like to think that I have a relatively good 360-degree view on all of the issues that we are talking about here today. I have also had my fair share of break-ins. I have to admit we have stopped calling the police because it did not really help and I was sick of everything getting covered in fingerprint dust. My husband was in an attempted carjacking and—I hate to tell you this—triple 0 hung up on him because they found his South African accent too hard to understand while he was pursuing his attempted carjackers. I do not know if it is reported or not but it certainly happened.

I have been thinking very long and hard about this bill because it is going to affect me, it is going to affect me living in Townsville and it is going to affect my workplace. I guess there is one line that keeps coming out—and I will not talk for very long today but I just wanted to raise it as a question to you. When we decided that custodial rather than non-custodial sentencing was preferential and had better outcomes, did we start to think about why that was and what systems we would need to put in place to make that not the case? I think that children do need longer times in prison because we know rehabilitation only happens with time. I am concerned that there is not enough language around rehabilitation in this bill.

We are all angry but monsters are created; they are not, for the most part, born. If we do not give due process to good quality rehabilitation then there is no point to this bill. It is hardening our criminals and making sure that they come out more organised at the other end because they have had longer together. This bill, I think, has some merit. I do think it is good to give children longer custodial sentences with a good emphasis on rehabilitation but, by the same token, are we going to look at what is happening in our communities to try to put a preventive slant on this, not just a reactive one?

**CHAIR:** Yes, most definitely. The process of the committee is not to ask the committee questions but I will address that. We have spoken about gold standard early intervention. What we do before hitting prison, what we do in prison and what we do post-prison is part of the plan, most certainly. Yes is the answer to your question.

**Dr Kleinman:** The reason I ask this question is, as a medical professional, I have been slightly traumatised dealing with the system as well. I have reported many of these children to Child Safety and there has been little to no feedback. I realise that is outside the scope of this bill but I am just concerned that we have a whole generation of children out there who are being let down by the system, traumatising us because they are traumatised and then being traumatised further.

**CHAIR:** Can I make this comment: this bill is not the only thing that needs to be done to address what everybody is talking about today. We made a commitment to make these particular laws by Christmas. Certainly, there are systemic things that need to be looked at as well. This is the first thing we are doing, not the only thing we are doing.

**Dr Kleinman:** Right.

**Ms MARR:** This is talking about changes to legislation. What you are talking about is programs to support the legislation. I can assure you it is certainly a very big consideration. We have spent a lot of time talking to programs that are currently running in Townsville. We will be results driven in terms of the programs. This government will make sure that the programs we have—early intervention and rehabilitation—are programs that are effective and getting results. We want to make sure we invest the right way to get the best results for these children.

We do not just want to put them in detention and forget about them. There is 12 months compulsory rehabilitation for the worst of the worst. You have to remember there is Adult Crime, Adult Time. We are talking about those repeat, violent offenders. The ones who do not fit in that category will be supported with early intervention and rehabilitation. I take on board what you are saying. Absolutely, that is a consideration for this government. What we are talking about today is the change in the legislation, and that is why you probably do not see that in there.

**Dr Kleinman:** Right. That is all I had to say.

**Mr RUSSO:** Thanks for coming along, Doctor. It is important that we have people present to the committee who are at the coalface and dealing with the aftermath of what happens to people in the community. I take on board the question that you have asked the committee. That is all part of the feedback that we need to hear. I would like to ask: is there a particular part of the bill that concerns you? I take on board that you say this is—

**Dr Kleinman:** My concern is that we have agreed that custodial sentencing is now far superior to community-based sentencing. We are acknowledging that there has been a failure there. My concern is that, once we put children in prison, they will be out of sight, out of mind without a commitment to good quality rehabilitation and that we are going to end up deferring an actual real-world problem for five to 10 years as opposed to solving it.

**CHAIR:** There being no further questions, thank you, Doctor. We will let you go. I now call Nick Attam to the table.

**ATTAM, Mr Nick, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** I welcome Nick Attam. I invite you to make a statement to the committee.

**Mr Attam:** My name is Nick Attam. I will not state my organisation, but I am here representing my community. As a community member I am here. I am a father of two children; they are the reasons I am here. First of all, I would like to congratulate David Crisafulli for winning this election, and we welcome this change—the change we have been waiting for to address crime in North Queensland, especially in Townsville. When I see the members of this committee—I saw the name of Mr Russell Field—I have every confidence, and the confidence has increased, that this bill will be passed and there will be more action on crime. He is a victim of crime, the same as me.

It is an emotional thing when we talk about crime because I am more active in my community. I live in Idalia. That is the most impacted area. The standard of living is very high, but the hit rate is very high as well. Every day there is a car stolen. I am not too worried about the cars being stolen—that is secondary for me—but the stolen car which is driven up my street where there are young children, like year 5 schoolchildren walking on my street, they are my concern. These kids do not care; they do not have any responsibility. I don't know about their families, but I will come back to that. I am concerned about my family and my community kids when they are walking to school or coming back from school. They do not know the road rules. These guys are rash driving, hitting the poles, damaging the properties, causing so much damage. It is really happening.

The change is welcome. That is what I am here to say: I welcome the change. There are a few things which I would like to suggest as part of this bill. I do not know whether it is relevant or it is not. Before the election, I was talking to all the members—everybody is talking about crime—'What are your suggestions?' Some of the members here talked about the children who grew up in the bush that their families experience domestic violence, crime and drug abuse. All these sorts of problems are there. But the children who are just born or going to school, how they are looking after them is the biggest challenge, which is the blue card. The rules around the blue card is if a person in the family steals a packet of chips or they did a small crime or something in their family, like they hurt. With the majority of the communities out there, there is at least one police case on them that restricts them having a blue card within the family. There is nobody to look after the kid, within the family—next of kin or anybody—who are not in a legal capacity to look after that kid. He is ending up in Townsville in foster care or some other thing. They come to Townsville. Those are the kids who are on the street. That is my limited education; I learn from different people.

I would like to request that for the First Nations people, crime is the biggest thing, but they do not consider what level of crime they have committed within there. There needs to be people up there looking after the young children who are just starting walking to school, like early prevention. Is there something which is going to be looked at making changes around the blue card? Maybe not part of this bill, but that is something that would help those kids coming onto the streets in Townsville.

**CHAIR:** We will take that as broader feedback in relation to the broader issue.

**Mr Attam:** Yes. I have been a victim of crime as well. When I first came to Townsville in 2016, in just three months I bought a house and we were woken up with the police calling out, 'Is anybody home?' That is at 6 o'clock.

**CHAIR:** Just making sure this is not before a court at the moment?

**Mr Attam:** No, it is not before the court. That is where I will come to. This is more than nine years now. My car was stolen. My kid was asleep. She was four years old at that time. She still remembers what happened that night. She woke up and she said, 'I don't see the car.' There were so many people. Police had come to investigate. They took the fingerprints. The people come to our home and drop the cards, like, 'We found this Medicare card. We found your licence. We found your wallet.' Everybody was sympathising. I ask the police, 'Where do I get the response? What are you going to do with this crime?' and he just honestly said, 'This could be a kid who is 12 years old, 14 years old.' Because he saw the handkerchief or gloves, he could say it was an underage child. If I take him to court, he will be out in two minutes. Before I get a coffee, he will be out of the chair. I was like, 'So who is responsible for this?' I am a taxpayer. I am paying most of my earnings in the form of a tax to feed that criminal on the street. Is this justifiable? So who do I ask this question? I ask the police. He has no answer.

There was a premier in Townsville. There was a parliament—the previous government. I take every opportunity to raise this concern with every government. I went up to the parliament here and I asked the Premier, 'So, who do I ask this question?' You know what, I don't know whether she understood my concern or she is ignoring. She said, 'Oh, good that you raise this concern. We do not hear that in Brisbane.' That was really upsetting me.

**CHAIR:** Are you talking about the former premier?

**Mr Attam:** Former premier, yes. That was not the only incident I raised as a concern. Even after that we have another parliament, members coming in here, have local parliament sessions, and I raised, but I was not satisfied with the answers. But I really congratulate Natalie and all the three members who have been here. They are making a change and we welcome this change, but this is just the beginning. We want to see the results for the crime. The crime may not disappear tomorrow, maybe not in five years, but you guys are putting in effort to tackle the change. I am here to protect my children. I want my daughter and my son to go to school with safe hands and when they come back home, they do not have to worry about what is happening out the front there—the front door. They do not have to worry about what is happening to the car. They do not have to worry about who is walking into their school gate. They have to be safe.

Another point is I have been reading so much about the crime in general terms, interventions, and how do you treat them. Sandra—I raised this in the past with her. They are being treated like they are in a five-star hotel in prison, so they could be taking advantage to go there, but it should not be that way. They should be treated as a criminal. They should be treated with education and discipline. When they come out, they should be coming out as a hardworking person where they can look for a job or they can treat someone else with respect, not go back to the crimes again.

In saying that, I am a victim. What sort of support do I get? Is counselling the only support I get, like when I call the police and they say, 'Here is a counselling card.' I have been looking around the world at what other supports victims get. In other states, they say if your car is stolen—some of them are not insured. They cannot afford insurance in this town. The insurance premiums are very high. I know this is not relevant to this bill, but is there financial support which can be given to the immediate family when they are the victim of it? With the elderly, there is support, but for people who are starting their life now—a 21-year-old's car is stolen and their job is lost. Maybe that is something you guys have to look at, too.

**CHAIR:** We will take that as general input in relation to crime.

**Mr Attam:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** That was about eight minutes. I move to questions now.

**Mr FIELD:** Thank you, Nick. I understand your concern about your community in general. Do those people and the people of Townsville, in the way everybody has voted here from the election, endorse the overall Adult Crime, Adult Time policy? As far as your community here is concerned, do you feel that is the right thing to do?

**Mr Attam:** It is the right thing. This is just the beginning, I would say. This is not the whole thing which we want. These are baby steps. This is the first thing you have done, which I really appreciate, because every criminal—like everywhere I have seen the people who have stolen the cars or have come into homes and threaten the people, they are underage. Something needs to be done for them. They are not nine or 10 years old; they are 13 to 16.

**Mr FIELD:** I also understand your argument on support. You are saying there is no support whatsoever for victims of stolen cars. We, in fact, have had no support—zero—zero dollars, zero support from the government for the last four years to the extent where the former premier did not even know who I was, so I understand your needs for having support. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Anything to the left?

**Mr RUSSO:** No, thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Nick, for your contribution to the committee.

**LEARD, Ms Irene, Helping Our Mob Everywhere**

**SIRRISS, Ms Lee-Toya, Helping Our Mob Everywhere**

**SMALLWOOD, Mr Alfred Junior, Helping Our Mob Everywhere.**

**CHAIR:** Good afternoon. I invite you to state your name for Hansard before making a presentation. Thank you.

**Mr Smallwood:** I am Alfred Smallwood Junior. I am proudly here representing the organisation called HOME—Helping Our Mob Everywhere. I would like to say first and foremost that I give our deepest sympathy and empathy towards all the victims who have been affected by the crime that goes on in Townsville. I have also been a victim of the crime that is happening within our community. I will state that crime has no colour to it. It is across the board, throughout our Indigenous First Nations community, as well as the non-Indigenous community. Everywhere across the board has been affected.

I would like to say first and foremost in regards to the Adult Crime, Adult Time bill, personally I have been working in the detention centre places for up to eight years after working in the construction industry as a qualified carpenter. I personally think, from the experience of working in that space, that putting these young people in the adult confined spaces was deemed to be a badge of honour for these young people. As it is, when these young people go in and out of the detention centre, all they are doing is just meeting up with their fellow peer groups and once they are in that space of adults then, as I said, it becomes a badge of honour.

What we actually need to do is come together as a community and come up with a transitional plan and a rehabilitation plan for your young people, and not look at six to 12 months transitional plans through programs; let's look at a longer program that will see fit for young people transitioning into adulthood. I would say a five-year transition plan and rehabilitation plan for young people, personally.

Going back to me being a victim of the crime that has been going on, my kids have been traumatised from what has happened as well. Not a day goes by where we are driving around on the streets that that is not in the back of all of our minds as well.

We have programs within our organisation that we have prepared ready to go for 2025 to implement good transitional plans from start to finish: pre-programs, post-programs and then follow-up. As a youth advocate for young people who are in that space, I work with high-risk young people, disengaged young people within the school curriculum as well as the detention centre space. We have an on-country program that I think will fit really well with our young people moving forward. If anybody out there is willing to get in touch with our organisation to find out more information, I am pretty sure we will let you in on it. I would also like to welcome and introduce my sister. She is also with our organisation. Her name is Lee-Toya Sirriss.

**Ms Sirriss:** Wudamuli, everyone. I would also like to acknowledge all the victims here and the traditional owners—the Wulgurukaba and Bindal peoples. As Alfred said, we are from Townsville. I actually spoke at the meeting when the Premier came that night. We are from Townsville and, as Alfred said, crime has no colour at all. I find that a lot of the people who have spoken agree. Social media is another barrier that we have. There is a lot of racism on there also. We are all tarred with the same brush because we have this skin. I cannot run from anybody; do you know what I mean? We go to work. We bust our arses, too, working for what we have; do you know what I mean?

I do not actually agree with this bill at all because what we are doing is promoting these kids to go to prison. They are coming from Cleveland. They are going to the big thing. Their dads, their uncles, their aunties and their mothers are in there. They are not frightened. We need to look at bringing the rights back to parents. Bring the discipline back. That is what is missing. These kids do not care. They are not frightened of anybody. When I went to school we had to line up in two lines outside a door. I was scared of my teacher. Do you know what I mean? Look at the curriculum for the kids right now. The old teachers are gone. The old teachers are not here anymore. That is my passion about it.

As I said, being Alfred's sister, when we started Helping Our Mob Everywhere—I think we were two weeks in—his Territory was stolen. He could have gone down two paths. What path are you going to go down? Alfred, are you going to go down the path as an advocate in your new job, or are you going to go down the path of being old school? Are we going to confront these people ourselves because the police do not listen? Are we going to do it ourselves, as a family? Thank the Lord that he said, 'I will do my job. I want to help these kids,' and he actually went out and spoke to them. These kids are not scared of their parents. They tell their mothers and fathers. Do you get what I am saying?



Anyway, I will get back to what we do. I am Lee-Toya. I am the assistant manager of H.O.M.E but I am also the recruitment officer. I have a little bit of information about our program that I would love to share. H.O.M.E was approached some months back by senior representatives from the Department of Youth Justice and Premier and Cabinet to talk about co-designing a fit-for-purpose, high-risk diversionary youth rehabilitation program to reduce recidivism and the impact it was having on the wider community.

H.O.M.E, Helping Our Mob Everywhere, has set out about co-designing a long-term program to transition high-risk youth offenders from the community into a very remote regional area to begin proper rehabilitation activities to break the ongoing cycle of peer-trained and facilitated crime in the community. Our program is long-term in its nature, flexible in its components and has an educational curriculum. If it is delivered over a long-term timeframe, it will help to counter or to dramatically reduce recidivism crime in our area or in any area.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are just as likely, or in some communities more likely, to be victims of crime, and the wider community need this to stop right now. The short-term bandaid solutions proposed by both the major political parties are just throwing good money after bad, quite literally. These recidivist 10- to 17-year-olds need a circuit breaker approach over a minimum of two years in duration to stop them becoming 'train the trainers' in crime for other youth who are at risk. Our program is designed for an early prevention or early contact with criminal justice stages. Their family circumstances are mapped with our partner organisations that run diversionary programs for all youth in our community to try to prevent them from presenting before the courts in the future.

There is a multitude of reasons why at-risk youth continue down the road towards high-risk recidivist crime, and we need to identify the root causes to address that first. The root causes are many and extraordinarily complex. Every high-risk youth offender will have a different story and need a different approach and intervention requirements. This is why a one-size-fits-all approach by government will not resolve this issue, nor will incarceration and throwing away the key because it will lead to more youth detention centres and social housing in our communities. Flexible intelligence-led multiple component programs, with continued support during and after release from the program, are the way forward. This will be dependent on government and potential employers having the stomach to put their money where their mouth is and deciding to really fix this problem in our community.

The emphasis is on government getting real about this; the courts referring high-risk offenders for proper rehabilitation and then, later, further education; and industry and/or potential employers helping to provide training and employment retention if the rehabilitation process has been deemed to be successful by an assessment panel of the co-designed advisory group. H.O.M.E is happy to talk with any organisations or individuals about our program and to accept critique or input for our co-designed program, because we are painfully aware that the complexity of this issue is important. We know that many in the community have been affected by this in some way and the wider community is emotionally invested in fixing the growing crime issues in Queensland.

**Ms MARR:** Thank you for your time. I did go to the earlier presentation and I want to thank you for your genuine care for the community. I did feel that when you both spoke there and today as well. I do believe that your intentions are genuine. Adult Crime, Adult Time does not mean that the juvenile goes to adult jail. They stay in a detention centre but they are charged similar to an adult for heinous crimes. My question is: do you feel that no consequences for actions and programs that are not getting the results that they should be are resulting in offenders joining in with others and committing crimes with those who are already in the system?

**Ms Sirriss:** Absolutely, yes.

**Ms MARR:** Do you feel that is the case?

**Ms Sirriss:** Yes.

**Ms MARR:** That is why we are here. Obviously we need to do better with programs that work to stop offenders joining in because they can see that there are no consequences for actions.

**Ms Sirriss:** Absolutely.

**Mr Smallwood:** All we need to do is really put the fear in these young people. Putting these young people in the space of the detention centre is just a joke now. We have to start putting the fear in these young people so that they do not want to go to the detention centres. We have to implement a program where these young people will be scared when they see us.

**Ms Sirriss:** Yes. There was a gentleman who spoke earlier about when he sat at the table with a 21-year-old because she had a piece of paper to say she has the answers. I am happy for her to go to uni and get that experience and do all that, absolutely, but the ones they listen to are the real deal.

It is the ones who have walked in those shoes—they are the ones. We were also raised by a single mother. There were 10 of us. Two of our brothers are dentists Australia wide. One is a doctor and another is a carpenter. We were raised strict. Our mum did not punch us up or anything like that, but if we mucked up we got slapped. Do you know what I mean? That does not happen anymore. You have people with lived experience who have come out and they know what they have done. They are the ones you want sitting at the table with these kids. We understand the blue cards and all that sort of thing. Over on Palm Island, or in remote communities, there are dads who cannot even get a job because they went to prison 10 years ago and that little blue card is stopping them from putting food on the table. Guess where their kid has gone now? Do you what I mean? These are the real stories.

**Mr FIELD:** You talked about going back to earlier times when people were different. Is there any particular point in time where you think that changed? I know what you are saying. When we were growing up everybody was disciplined in different ways. Is there any particular moment—or just progressively over time—when the discipline or youths' respect for elders was not there anymore?

**Ms Sirriss:** Absolutely.

**Mr FIELD:** When did that occur?

**Ms Sirriss:** I am 47. We grew up going to Weir primary school and Kirwan high school. We grew up in a housing commission house on Hudson Street—a three-bedroom house with all us kids. As we got older—I am thinking in the late 1990s or 2000s maybe—that is when my niece came home with a card. At this time I was living in Brisbane, in Capalaba. The card said, 'If your mummy or daddy smacks you, this is the number to call.' I said, 'What? Ring the police now because you are about to get whacked by your aunty. Don't bring that rot in this house.' With our jobs we go out and we talk to Stars and Clontarf throughout the high schools. I came out from having a meeting and I heard swearing and this little Murri kid jumped out the window and told his teacher to get effed. Then he came close to me and I said, 'I'll whack you. Don't come near me.' Do you know what I mean? They have zero respect. If there is no discipline or anything at home, they are not going to listen to you. They are not going to listen to anybody.

**Mr Smallwood:** Personally I think the era of the new millennium has really changed society, from the year 2000 onwards I believe. I remember community discipline used to be very strong within our community. We would have different elders who were not even family related. They were from other family groups who knew us and they would look at us and tell us, 'We know who you are. Get home to your family.' These days, I believe from the new millennium onwards, the community discipline has changed. That is the answer to your question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I appreciate both of you being here today and all of the other submitters. I really value everyone's time. I appreciate the point you made that 'crime has no colour'. That is as true as anything. The documents around this bill make explicit reference to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids in the youth justice system. A lot of experts have spoken for a lot of years about the importance of culturally appropriate programs. Can either of you talk about the influence of culturally appropriate intervention programs and what that actually looks like in your experience?

**Ms Sirriss:** I can actually do one better. Our managing director, Ms Irene Leard, is here. She can elaborate.

**Ms Leard:** Can you repeat the question?

**Mr BERKMAN:** The question was what you see as the importance of culturally appropriate sentences. Can you speak to the importance of culturally appropriate youth intervention programs and what, in practical terms, those programs should look like?

**Ms Leard:** The program that we have written has different components—1, 2, 3 and 4. The first part is to take young offenders away from Townsville onto a property that we have secured through a landowner who is Indigenous and would like to help young offenders. That first component is where we assess the children and identify what needs to be looked at first, whether they have mental illness, whether it is drugs or alcohol—we will assess them correctly by the correct people. The second component is where we will have the Indigenous elders, not only from a mature age but also from a younger age group, as in Alfred and also down a lot further. Those cultural programs will take them back to country and actually start teaching them about what culture really is. It is not necessarily specific to Indigenous only. As we said, crime does not discriminate between colour. Each part of the community of those kids that we have referred to us, if we are successful in this program, will learn each other's culture so the respect starts to come into play for each other.

**CHAIR:** I appreciate what you are saying and the work that you do, but we are starting to go outside the scope of the bill. We are constrained by time. We will have to move on.

**Ms Leard:** We would like to have that discussion later.

**RICHARDSON, Mr Reuben, Private capacity**

**Mr Richardson:** Ladies and gentlemen, thanks for the opportunity to discuss the Queensland Youth Justice Bill 2024. While I commend the swift action taken by the new government, several key areas require some attention outside of the bill or on the edges. Firstly, the bill does not delve into the root causes of youth crime. We must understand why these young people engage in criminal activities and I recommend a survey of some description to gather insights from those directly affected—our detained youth—to inform the strategy and identify whether these legislative changes will truly serve as a deterrent.

Secondly, the notion that detention will deter crime seems off target if the external conditions are more dire for these kids. If detention becomes a social housing alternative we are not deterring but inadvertently promoting long-term incarceration. On parental accountability, we must ensure that parents are equipped to provide a nurturing, disciplined environment; however, the state should not undermine parental authority with unnecessary interventions. There is a balance to strike here, ensuring that parents can discipline without fear of losing custody which often leads to more harm than good.

Financially, the bill lacks clarity on cost implications. There are a couple of short lines in the explanation that I saw but no real detail. I have heard each youth in detention is costing around \$1 million annually. Innovative sentences, like relocation sentencing suggested by the Katter's Australian Party, could be both rehabilitative and cost effective. The current capacity of our youth justice system is already strained. An increase in detained youth could overwhelm our facilities unless we adopt strategies that manage both rehabilitation and capacity.

The time line for public input was also surprisingly brief, reflecting a worrying trend of passing laws with limited debate. Queensland's lack of an upper house further reduces checks and balances. I urge for more public involvement, perhaps through mechanisms like referendums with existing election processes.

Lastly, given the haste in this bill's passage, it is crucial we implement regular transparent reviews. These should feature specific KPIs, open data and public hearings to measure its impact on both reducing victimisation and offending. Thank you for your consideration and let us ensure that our youth justice system is both effective and just.

**Ms MARR:** Thank you so much for being here today. I want to clarify one thing: there is no costing in the bill because it is a budget item and not a legislation item. I want to point out that that is why it is not here. Thank you for being here today. Do you think what we currently have in place with legislation is keeping our community safe?

**Mr Richardson:** No.

**Ms MARR:** My next question to you is do you believe that we had many of these meetings prior to us getting into parliament, we had the opportunity to have those conversations and that people brought to us their concerns during those times as well?

**Mr Richardson:** Yes, absolutely. Lots of discussions.

**Ms MARR:** I question when you say it has been rushed through with no consultation because I believe there has been consultation for such a long time. Our community is asking for results. Is there anything in the bill that you believe is a positive change for the community?

**Mr Richardson:** I think the bill is a great first step. I would just like to see KPIs to make sure we are measuring it because it is a short process. It came out on Friday. That is the first time the public potentially saw it. Thanks to Chris, Monday was the first time it got out to Townsville proper through the Bully. I was reading it last night and then this morning wrote a submission and sent it in. It was 100 pages and today is the day and the report is coming out on Friday. With what we have seen happening in the federal Senate, with legislation getting rushed through—33 bills—I would just like to make sure that proper due process is occurring and people are getting their say along the way.

**Ms MARR:** I would just like to say Adult Crime, Adult Time has been out in the community for a very long time for the consultation process. It has not just been the last 100 days. In relation to KPIs, I think every bit of legislation that is put through parliament needs review. The current legislation comes from 1992 and things are very different today. I take on board that that is what you would like us to consider as well.

**Mr Richardson:** Yes. The first reading of the bill was Friday; is that right?

**CHAIR:** Thursday.

**Mr Richardson:** That was the first time the public got to see it; is that right?

**CHAIR:** The bill was introduced last Thursday.

**Mr BUTCHER:** The Labor Party opposition certainly has the same issues that you have referred to. The Adult Time, Adult Crime legislation is 52 pages of legislation that has been presented—

**CHAIR:** You are making a statement there. Do you have a question?

**Mr BUTCHER:** My question is do you think that this legislation, that will be debated and passed next week, will make any difference?

**Mr Richardson:** I think it is great where it is heading. On a cursory overview, there are 50 pages and I went through it quickly—it is not my specialty by any stretch of the imagination. We need to ensure there is time for public comment. I had a look at the submissions—there are six sitting in there at the moment. I am guessing you are only going to get 20, 30 compared to the 100 at the last crime meeting. It is about making sure that we have action and that things are actually occurring. I think it is great to see you guys all on board, but I just want to make sure that you are looking also at the families, making sure that we are not just creating this tunnel of kids that are going to be coming through the system and we are creating long-term incarcerations. You do not have space for what is potentially going to come your way. It needs to not be social housing, it needs to be a deterrent and if it is not a deterrent it is not going to work.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Richardson.

**HANLEY, Mr Peter, Private capacity**

**Mr Hanley:** I am a member of the local Townsville Amnesty International group. I am here for several reasons. Firstly, I am concerned about the fact that the proposed legislation contravenes human rights responsibilities and I am also concerned that the things being proposed will actually make the community safer. If we look at the principles of child justice, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and our own human rights legislation, I think you can say that there is strong agreement that kids should not be in jail. I think everyone here would ideally say children should not be in jail or detention, but the bottom line is that, as a result of this legislation, there are going to be more children in detention and there is evidence all around the world that if you put children in detention it leads to reoffending. Putting children in the detention system is going to lead to an increase in reoffending and I do not think that is up for discussion because it has been shown in many studies around the world.

If we look at our own Human Rights Act, we were very happy as a human rights organisation to see Queensland introduce human rights legislation, but it is really sad to see how easily both the previous government and this government are able to put that aside and say, okay, for what we need we will actually go against that legislation. Human rights legislation has been shown around the world to be a really important part of communities being safe, communities being just, communities being fair so it is a real concern that we are actually in contravention with our own Human Rights Act and with the international act, such as the rights of the child. Again, that is a huge concern to our human rights organisation.

As for the impact on First Nations people, currently 72 per cent of children in detention are from a First Nations background. When we look at their background, as a number of speakers have already said, they are coming from a background where there is a deficit in material wellbeing but also often there is not the family support the children need to grow up in a responsible and worthwhile way.

This was brought home to me personally a few years ago. I remember speaking to a friend who worked as a guard in the Cleveland detention centre and he said he was there on Christmas Day and there was a young boy who was 11 years old on the gate sleeping at the door asking if he could be let in. There was nowhere that child could go safely on Christmas Day, so his response was, 'I want to get into the detention centre because at least I'll be safe here and I'll get food here.' That is just one example but we hear many examples. Several speakers said earlier how children come to people like security forces and all sorts of people who they can feel safe around. Our system is broken, and I heard that said earlier. The system is broken and I do not think putting children in detention or putting them away is going to do anything to really fix the system that is broken.

We talked about the costs. To hold a child in detention for a year is \$1 million, and this is based on government reports. We look at other programs that have been mentioned. The early speakers mentioned some of the justice reinvestment programs that give kids a chance. They cost money but nothing like a million dollars a year. I think it is really important that, rather than the response being to put them in jail, we spend some money and some time. These systems are so complex. What has really struck me sitting here this afternoon is that there are so many sides to the system and a quick easy-fix solution is not going to solve the problem overnight. It is beholden on us to start looking around at what works and be prepared to spend time and energy doing what is needed.

We have some really good programs here in Townsville, such as the Johnathan Thurston Academy. There is well-published evidence of the effectiveness of some of those programs. There is the flexible learning school. I have spoken to a couple of staff there and they talk about the real changes they see in some of the young people who have come there who have been failed by the education system. They actually have a new future from that flexible learning school. There are lots of good examples like that. There is The Lighthouse that is operated by TAIHS, the local Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service. That has runs on the board for getting people out of the criminal justice system and onto some sort of road for the future.

Let us spend the time and the energy doing that, rather than just this reaction of thinking that putting them in jail is going to make them safer. The evidence is there. It does not make things safer. It might make them safer for five years or 10 years, but once they are in the criminal justice system the evidence is there that that is where they will stay.

We also need to look outside our own borders. Some friends have done research into systems in other jurisdictions—places like Norway and Scandinavia. All levels of crime are much lower than here and people say, 'That's because they spend so much.' When we talk about spending so much, when we hear some of the stories here—the heartache and the agony that is put up with by so many

victims of crime and the waste of lives we have—surely this is an area that needs much more resourcing and serious resourcing so we can turn the place around and start getting a society that we all want to live in. Thank you for this opportunity.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Hanley, for putting forward your views. You acknowledged just then the victims in the room who have been distressed by this crime scourge locally here. That is why we are here today to listen to them.

**Mr Hanley:** I am not discounting the seriousness. It is an extremely serious issue.

**CHAIR:** My question therefore is this: keeping in mind that this bill is aimed at the most serious offences by the most serious offenders, do you believe there is a place for custodial sentences for juveniles?

**Mr Hanley:** As a last resort. That is the accepted human rights—as a last resort.

**CHAIR:** So the most serious offences by the most serious offenders.

**Mr Hanley:** As a last resort, but I think we have to look at other possibilities before that.

**CHAIR:** Also, you said that the research shows that incarceration causes offences to increase. The director-general gave evidence yesterday that that is not the case in Queensland—that statistics show that the level and number of offences actually decreases from pre-custody to post-custody. Do you have any research you can point the committee towards that shows what you have asserted?

**Mr Hanley:** I have actually put a submission in and there is a reference there to that.

**Mr BERKMAN:** In terms of the evidence the chair has referred to from the DG yesterday, I would suggest that we have not actually seen that—given the very short time frames for this whole inquiry to be undertaken—but it does seem at odds with the very well-established and longstanding evidence around the consequences of detention for reoffending. If you were to have an opportunity to look at that evidence as it is from the director-general, would you be interested in providing further information for the committee's consideration, whether or not that can be considered in the committee's report?

**Mr Hanley:** Me, personally, I am just a local volunteer, but certainly I would be very happy to forward it to our Indigenous rights team who would actually—

**CHAIR:** I think the witness did indicate that he put in the submission a reference to research.

**Mr Hanley:** Yes.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Indeed. I was just suggesting that, once this very fresh and, I would suggest, questionable evidence is actually available for the community to respond to, then he might like, or Amnesty, might like to respond to it.

**CHAIR:** Are there any other questions?

**Mr FIELD:** You talked about human rights and the like and you do not think that child killers should be put away. What do you think should happen to them?

**Mr Hanley:** I did not say that. What I said was, as a last resort—

**Mr BUTCHER:** Chair, point of order: the gentleman did not say that.

**CHAIR:** Member, can you rephrase the question? I think you misquoted the witness.

**Mr FIELD:** Okay. If children murder people or kill people, what do you think should happen to them?

**Mr Hanley:** There is certainly a place for detention but there has to be an emphasis on rehabilitation. For some people, that may not happen, but the emphasis has to be on rehabilitation and not on punishment because it has been shown in so many places that punishment just leads to more crime.

**Mr FIELD:** If your son or daughter was killed, what would you expect—justice?

**Mr Hanley:** I am not debating that—

**Mr BERKMAN:** Chair, point of order: the question has been put—

**CHAIR:** Absolutely. You do not have to respond to that. Thank you, Mr Hanley. That is over 10 minutes, so we will have to leave it there. We appreciate you coming along and addressing the committee.

**SIMMONS, Ms Madonna, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Welcome. Could you state your name for the record and then I invite you to make a submission for the committee.

**Ms Simmons:** My name is Madonna Simmons. I am a small business owner. I will just give you some background about myself. I have managed shopping centres over the years. I have been second in charge of Townsville and Mount Isa airports back in my corporate days and I also managed media. I have been on many boards over my career, including the Townsville Chamber of Commerce for eight years, as well as many other not-for-profit boards.

On a personal note, I am going to brandish some things that people in this room who know me do not know. I come from a domestic violence background. I come from a family of six and my mother raised me. I come from a low socioeconomic background but I am who I am today because I chose to be that person and so too did every single one of my siblings. We chose to turn up to school, we chose to be disciplined and we chose to listen to our peers and respect our peers. One thing I have always said over my career is that I want to give back, so I have given back through many not-for-profit boards. I am also self-educated and I have continued to self-educate into my later years. I have had very poor health as well and I continue to do what I can. However, there is one thing that I want to bring to attention about the bill.

During my career—and this was about 4½ or five years ago—I was approached by Stockland shopping centre. I notice that the three major shopping centres of this community are absent from this room, and I do not know why they are absent. Maybe they have had an opportunity to submit in different forums. The shopping centres are a congregating place for our youths. Even back 25 years ago when I managed shopping centres—one of them being Willows Shopping Centre—they were always a place of congregation. Stockland came to my business due to the fact that they were suffering some years ago a quarter of a million dollars in repairs in a cycle of 12 months, and it has only escalated since then. I cannot speak on their behalf. I am only speaking on what I was engaged to do. That money does not come into their budget, as well as the extra engagement they had to do with police, dog squads and liaison officers.

One of the managers decided to do something about it. She engaged at the time 30 other community groups and they came to the party. I was then the community engagement person, the consultant, who brought the community groups together. We initiated a product called the Social Good Initiative. The Social Good Initiative was funded through the state government of \$300,000 and came through Churches of Christ and then QYS. That program ran every Thursday night. The reason it ran on a Thursday night is that that is when the youth were most active. We ran it for three years. We engaged everyone from the churches to TAIHS, the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service, to all different types of cultural persons in the area of Aitkenvale.

What we saw there was positive change over the first 18 months. We had over 100 youths from families of all different types of ethnicity attend. We had basketball. We had food. We had something that they basically presented and we engaged them. What we then noticed was a very sharp change in culture and attitude, whereby those youth offenders who were out stealing the cars wanted to disrupt what we had. It then became a place whereby we were mitigating violence. Funding was not taken away, but unfortunately the Churches of Christ decided that their staff were in harm's way, so I was left on my own with my own staff and security. The issue then became the fact that Stockland did not want to fund it on their own, so that whole program was wasted—three years of hard work.

**CHAIR:** Ms Simmons, sorry to interrupt you. I gave you a fair bit of latitude there talking about that program but I just draw you back to the bill.

**Ms Simmons:** Okay. What came out of that was many different points—the point of drug use, the point that these youths did not go to school, the point that they had no respect for the elders. I apologise to the elders who are here, and they came to many of our meetings. The respect was gone. We were trying to engage elders, but the youth had no respect for them.

What also came out of that was the fact that the businesses were being highly affected with the escalation of them stealing things such as food. Whatever they wanted they took and the shops did not stop them because they were going to be in harm's way. What I also wanted to come out of that was that we found it difficult as consultants to map out who to speak to because there were so many agencies and so many people getting funding that it became so difficult to speak to the people about outcomes. They were all there—and I am sorry—to get bang for their buck to try to keep their own organisation afloat, so nobody wanted to step on anyone's toes. We wanted this map and we tried so hard to get this map of who did what in the Queensland government and/or agencies.



The other thing that came out of it was flexi learning. Many of them thought that flexi learning was great, but a lot of them thought that it was a holiday—that they could do whatever they wanted when they wanted, and they told us this. They also came out to me to say, ‘Excuse me, you’re a white girl. What would you care?’ I then said to them, ‘How do you know what colour I am?’, because they do not. We then gave them differences of opinions with regard to why they should listen to us and they did listen. The things that came out of the—

**CHAIR:** Ms Simmons, I just draw you back to the bill again. I appreciate that in the wider context of juvenile crime you are trying to cover some of the aspects of your program, but I draw you back to relevance to the bill before the committee.

**Ms Simmons:** Yes, I got that. Out of the bill what I think is important is that the victims are definitely present. Out of the bill I think in the future for the next stage is truancy and getting the education right at a very young level. This is not out of the bill, but the thing is that they have lost respect for the police and I do not know how to bring that back into that. What they have not lost respect for in our garrison city is Defence, so I just wanted to tell you that. This question also came up: when do you think this changed? I think it changed in the early 2000s when my child came home and asked me whether I had a blue card.

**CHAIR:** Are there any questions for this witness? As there are no questions, thank you, Ms Simmons, for your attendance. We are nearing the end of our time, folks, and I appreciate that not everyone will get to speak today. You may make a submission to the committee and the committee has resolved to accept late submissions. If it does not make the report, it will still be presented to the parliament for parliamentary debate, so I encourage you, even if you have missed the cut-off date for the committee’s report, to make a submission online and it will form part of the debate.

**WALTERS, Mr Harvey, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Mr Walters, I invite you to make a submission to the committee.

**Mr Walters:** My name is Harvey Walters. I am a barrister here in Townsville. I have been practising at the local bar for 36 years. I came to the Townsville region as a two-year-old with my parents. My father was managing a cattle station. I used to travel to school an hour and a half on two different school buses. I went to a local state school, Stuart State School, which is now closed. I went to high school at Townsville State High School, which just celebrated 100 years this year. I did my first degree at James Cook University. I did not do law there because they did not have a law degree there when I studied, and I was a country boy and I did not want to go to university in the big city. Academically I could do it, but I did not want to leave this city. Eventually I got a job as an articled law clerk and did my law degree externally through QUT. Part way through my articles I decided that I really wanted to be a barrister. I transferred to the prosecutions office. When I was admitted as a barrister, they immediately gave me a commission to prosecute and a job as a prosecutor. I did that for a couple of years and then I went to the private bar.

I have had a good look at the bill. No legislation is perfect, but this is a real concern here in Townsville. I am a victim of crime too, as is my family. I live in Palmer Street. We were insulated from things until about 18 months ago. I was reading about it and, even though I was practising law and doing very serious crime, I thought that it could not possibly be as bad as it is—but it is and it is getting worse. The community has had enough. Our judiciary is hamstrung. With a lot of the laws at the moment, they do not have the tools—and I am talking about very serious offending—to deal with it. I appreciate the concerns that have been expressed publicly by different organisations about this legislation, but nothing is set in stone. As I said, every piece of legislation has problems. I read the legislation. Yes, there are harsh conditions here but there is still, as I read the legislation, discretion for the judiciary, when they look at different matters, to exercise different sentencing options. The bill really centres on serious crime, and that I think is a real concern to Townsville citizens.

There are criticisms of what you do with the offenders, but nobody comes out and gives you a solution as to how to deal with the crime wave we are experiencing here in Townsville at the moment, and I note that this government is now trying to do something about it. As I say, everything has to be a compromise and legislation can be amended if people realise, 'We should've changed this or not done that.' It is not something that is set in stone forever and errors can be corrected, but I believe the legislation will give the bench, magistrates and judges, greater flexibility in dealing with serious crime.

In terms of another issue we have here, it was interesting to see the proposal for a third District Court judge raised in the lead-up to the election. I actually addressed the court in Christmas matters two years ago about the very same issue. The irony of this is that in the 1980s Townsville had three District Court judges and back then the jurisdiction in the mid to late 1980s was a far smaller jurisdiction than now because the Supreme Court dealt with every matter that carried a potential life sentence which included murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery and burglary. They were being dealt with in the Supreme Court back then and that changed in 1989 when I was a Crown Prosecutor and then one of the District Court judges was removed from Townsville because—to be honest, it was Ian Wylie—he wanted to go back to Brisbane, so he spent his entire time here undermining the third judge, and that is common knowledge.

**CHAIR:** I just draw you back to the bill please, Mr Walters.

**Mr Walters:** Yes. Going back to the bill, I believe that the legislation will enable the bench and the judiciary to implement change to protect this community quickly. Unfortunately the youth problems overall are going to be a long-term problem, but that long-term problem will not protect Townsville citizens, and I believe that this bill will assist that. I may suffer a lot of criticism for this, but I am living here, I am experiencing it and I know what is going on.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Walters. It is now three o'clock and I—

**Mr Walters:** Yes, I appreciate that.

**CHAIR:**—propose to extend this hearing just until the end of this witness. I will give you the full 10 minutes we have given everybody else, so if you would like to continue or go direct to questions, it is up to you.

**Mr Walters:** The other area where I think emphasis has to be made is drug rehabilitation. That, as I see it, is the biggest problem we have in our community. If you ask when it started, when the problem started really depends on how old you are. I am probably a lot older than some other speakers

and the problem has been getting worse continually. I think the major issue is the breakdown of family. People say, 'Why don't the parents take more responsibility?' A lot of the children, as I see it, do not have any parents who are willing to take responsibility, or their own life is in such turmoil. Most of them come from single-parent families with turmoil, with drugs.

When I started out the big drug was alcohol. That is where all the violence and everything else occurred—with alcohol. Now it is methamphetamine. That is what I believe is the most important thing—that is, to have rehabilitation for drug use, for both the parents and the juvenile offenders, because it is the scourge of the community at this point in time. Perhaps there is greater chance of doing that with the stronger laws in relation to sentencing. Once again, there is still the discretion though for persons who are not the core offenders—serious offenders—to have alternatives to sentencing.

Those are my observations, unless there is anything you would like to ask me. As I say, I have been doing this for 36 years here in Townsville. One of the difficulties too at the moment is that we are making up the numbers with judges who come from other centres, but they do not know the problems in our own community. They do not even know the logistics of where places are. I find that when I go to another centre and do work all over the state. It really is important that if a third judge is to be appointed they have somebody who knows local issues.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your contribution, Mr Walters, and thank you for casting your learned eye across the bill itself. As you correctly identified, it does not restrict judges in sentencing and offers the discretion in sentencing. Would you also agree that it, nowhere in the bill, removes the right of police officers to use discretion in relation to cautions and restorative justice processes that already exist?

**Mr Walters:** Yes, that remains. My only caution, speaking with a very senior police officer yesterday, is that there will have to be care taken in that that discretion sometimes is not exercised as they go to a more harsh measure on certain offenders who do not require that, even though I believe it is necessary for the more serious offending.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Any questions to my left?

**Mr RUSSO:** Just an administrative matter, Harvey. I saw you had an article there. Is that something that you wanted to give to the committee?

**Mr Walters:** I can hand that up. That is actually a *Townsville Bulletin* report of when I spoke two years ago about the very issue of understaffing—

**CHAIR:** I do not know that it is relevant to the bill.

**Mr Walters:** No, probably not.

**CHAIR:** I would not seek for you to table that, no.

**Mr RUSSO:** It is only relevant to the appointment of a third judge?

**Mr Walters:** Yes, and the workload that we have here at the moment, yes.

**Mr RUSSO:** Mr Walters, in relation to the cautions and the restorative justice part, it has been suggested to the committee that those provisions will make it harder for defence lawyers to advise their clients to go down that route. Do you have a comment about that? I will expand: because of the fact that after the passing of this legislation, if you get cautioned, it could be used against you for about a five-year period from when you go from being a child to an adult, whereas now that does not show up on your criminal history.

**Mr Walters:** Personally, I believe the sentencing court should have access to that so that they are not sentencing in an artificial light. Do I think long term that is good for somebody who has rehabilitated themselves in the future, for that to be with them forever and a day? No, I do not think that is good for those people who do rehabilitate. But, as we all know, unfortunately there are a lot of people who do not.

**CHAIR:** We will make this the last question, committee. Is everyone happy with that? Thank you, Michael.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thank you, Mr Walters. We had it brought to our attention yesterday that with the removal of detention as a last resort from youth justice sentencing, while it remains in the Penalties and Sentences Act, we will be creating a situation where the sentencing principles are, in fact, harsher for children than they are for adults. Do you have any reflection on that?

**Mr Walters:** I did note when reading the legislation, sections 9 and 10 are different for the youth justice provisions. That, I think, is a difficulty. Yes, I do see from a legal sense that the juveniles will be in a more difficult position than an adult because of that. However, as I said again, that is probably something that needs to be tweaked with the legislation to get rid of that anomaly.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Walters. Thank you to the members of the committee, Hansard and the secretariat for today. Most of all, thank you to the community of Townsville who has turned out to speak to us today. I understand that not everybody got to speak to this committee. As I said, I reiterate that I do encourage you to submit still to the committee via the parliamentary website, and those submissions can be used by the parliament to inform the debate. Thank you. I close the meeting.

**The committee adjourned at 3.07 pm.**