

## **Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024**

**Submission No:** 13  
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2<sup>nd</sup> Dec

Inquiry into Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

My name is Salvatore (Sam) Costanzo and I live in Townsville.

For over 9 years I have been admin on my local suburban facebook crime alert page and have watched with disgust at the weekly rampages by juveniles across this city.

I have wasted my time over the years in trying to represent my fellow neighbours at countless meetings where I found that the opinion of residents never mattered.

In that time a number of us have also monitored QPS analogue radio up until it went digital. We discovered just how disgusting their approach to stolen cars has been since about 2020 when they applied a complete blanket ban on all pursuits of stolen vehicles.

A number of us also found first-hand how 000 police would HANG UP on people reporting juveniles and even adults in a stolen car hooning, driving dangerously etc. It was also bad enough to wait up to 8 MINUTES FOR 000 POLICE TO ANSWER.

We also found how useless police link was in that it would take up to 25MINUTES for them to answer to report a located stolen car. On some occasions we (myself included) have WAITED 4 HOURS FOR POLICE TO ATTEND A DUMPED STOLEN CAR. This on a number of occasions has led to run ins with criminals teens, adults, trying to re-steal that vehicle while we wait for police. Calling 000 would bring NO HELP. On number of occasions I have had stolen cars I have located in my area, restolen while wasting my time waiting for police to attend.

Due to the shift to digital radio admins of crime alert pages also NO LONGER have the ability to warn residents when police are chasing suspects in the area, no ability to warn residents of when attempted carjackings, AND successful carjackings occur. In fact there is such a complete void of information to the public in Townsville that it would appear crime is swept under the carpet because of the inability to warn residents and the almost complete lack of media reporting as even they don't know anything and now rely heavily on being informed by social media pages when a crime occurs.

There is growing distrust of QPS officers in the community, to do the right thing and to actually show up when 000 is called. Comments appear daily on social media about the complete lack of response when yet another rampage occurs in which multiple stolen vehicles drive across the city in BROAD DAYLIGHT, BREAKING INTO HOMES, CARJACKING PEOPLE, STEALING MORE CARS, AND RUNNING MOTORISTS OFF THE ROAD.

This past few months in Townsville have again had multiple convoys of stolen cars driving around causing havoc, multiple cars set on fire or driven in creeks and rivers.

More concerning we saw the theft of a police issue service weapon and a lack luster response from police as one of the vehicles stolen (A black BMW) during the theft of that firearm, was allowed to drive around non-stop with other stolen cars for up to 12hrs.

The next day a violent home invasion occurred in Douglas and a hand gun was used.

Because of the growing rampant juvenile crime, our local community is now forced to take serious action to defend ourselves due to an almost complete lack of policing over the last couple of years.

For a number of years now the crime has been slowly escalating and becoming more violent and brazen to the point that Townsville is under siege by a group of up to 60 to 70 repeat offenders (as reported by local media in December 2023)

In Townsville car theft has spiralled out of control in 2023, with 1628 cars stolen and 4779 break and enters recorded (source: <https://gps-ocm.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/index.html>).

**Car theft has increased over 55% in just over 2 yrs in the Townsville local government area**, with 1335 stolen in 2022 and 1040 in 2021.

**(Break and enters have also increased just over 20% in 2 yrs, with 4505 in 2022 and 3841 in 2021.)**

There has been an almost complete lack of policing in Townsville and QPS officers have been ordered to turn a blind eye to the unfolding situation. Their discretionary powers have been removed. This is, I believe a criminal offence. Yet NO ONE has questioned this.

Car theft (or “unlawful use”) is, under the Qld Criminal Code, an “Indictable offence” and this very fact has been completely forgotten and ignored by the previous ALP government, QPS and the court system.

QPS TOWNSVILLE OVER THE LAST 4 YEARS HAS NOT TREATED CAR THEFT AS A HIGH PRIORITY JOB.

Car theft has been watered down to be akin to stealing “kit kats” and of little importance apparently, when car ownership is in fact the 2<sup>nd</sup> most expensive outlay of money that any person can commit to, other than buying their own home.

One flow on effect from this increase in car theft is sky rocketing insurance premiums, adding to the cost of living pain.

In the last couple of months of 2023 we saw a huge escalation of crime, with violent home invasions, violent carjackings, motorists being rammed off the road or chased by stolen cars, a motorbike rider run down, pedestrians and bike riders being targeted by stolen cars, and in December multiple businesses ram raided and destroyed, at least 100 stolen cars set on fire and multiple people assaulted by gangs of youths armed with bats driving around in stolen cars. Also multiple police vehicles targeted and Ambulances menaced.

During 2024 we have seen more of the same, but most of it is no longer being reported by local media and ill explain why later.

As evidence of the spiralling effect of a lack of policing, in October 137 vehicles were stolen and in November a whopping 153 cars stolen (stats taken from the QPS online crime mapping page)

During 2023 QPS officers stood by and watched it all unfold and preceded to do nothing and were ordered to retreat to their respective police stations on a number of occasions, all of this was broadcast over the analogue police channel and even exposed on local TV news and the Bulletin.

QPS in a media release dated the 13<sup>th</sup> DEC 2023 police actually admit to watching 2 dangerous situations unfold right in front of them and did nothing about the situation.

[https://mypolice.qld.gov.au/townsville/2023/12/13/appeal-for-information-dangerous-driving-townsville/?fbclid=IwAR11hawylqFtOEChnVRQ9DUeuvPB\\_X3SZ2bMmtEcVO\\_AOd60aVBGbxOzklo](https://mypolice.qld.gov.au/townsville/2023/12/13/appeal-for-information-dangerous-driving-townsville/?fbclid=IwAR11hawylqFtOEChnVRQ9DUeuvPB_X3SZ2bMmtEcVO_AOd60aVBGbxOzklo)

I quote the following:

**At around 1.30pm on December 9, police observed the allegedly stolen red Ford Ranger driving along Fairfield Waters Drive on the wrong side of the road towards civilian vehicles, causing them to take evasive action to avoid a collision. Following this, at around 1.50pm, police allegedly observed the vehicle driving along University Drive, still on the wrong side of the road into oncoming traffic, again causing numerous vehicles to take evasive action to avoid a collision.**

Serious indictable offences were allowed to be committed with no reaction from police who had no plan to deal with it or concern for the safety of members of the public.

This can only be described as a serious breach of their oath of office which they swore when they became members of the Qld police service.

The blatant disregard shown by serving officers can only be because they have been ordered to do nothing and they appear to be happy to do so. This was VERY apparent when CH7 Brisbane news (9<sup>th</sup> Dec in 2023) exposed what is believed to be a senior officer berating officers in the dark after a stolen car rammed police.

**Quote from the CH7 news recording:**

**"You guys turned up, they rammed you, and then what happened?"**

**I've now lost a fourth police car in a week.**

**As soon as police get involved, they up it, they up the ante and they do this shit.**

**Was this happening before you guys went into the servo?**

**No it wasn't.**

**You escalated their behaviour."**

This can only be described as abhorrent behaviour by a senior officer who's only concern appeared to be the loss of 4 police cars, instead of worrying about the community he is supposed to protect. It's a wonder that QPS officers are leaving in droves when you have employed and promoted fools like this into the service.

Rampages across Townsville are constantly posted up on social media crime pages, with convoys of stolen cars driven from one end of Townsville to the other, without police interference.

Hooning, dangerous driving, burnouts, home invasions, all in broad daylight and simply ALLOWED TO HAPPEN. Stolen cars are simply allowed to carry on for weeks on end, despite all the lies from QPS and the previous government about how POLAIR is helping stop them sooner, we know this is simply not occurring.

We have also experienced a lack of help from QPS officers answering 000, who routinely hang up / talk rudely to people etc.. when trying to report a situation involving stolen cars. Many times on social media people have posted their disgust with 000 Police who seemed completely disinterested in what was being reported.

The state has wasted/ allocated hundreds of millions on "feel good" programs, none of which are designed to put an end to crime **NOW**.

**We have waited for the state to act for 9yrs to enact legislation to put an end to rampant juvenile crime but it has not eventuated.**

Because the behaviour has been allowed to escalate to this violent and out of control situation by deliberate means we the residents of this town demand the following occur:

- 1) The immediate sacking of the OIC Townsville who did not foresee the escalation occurring right before them, this is despite the community clearly seeing what was happening and being allowed to happen by QPS.
- 2) An immediate investigation be launched into the Townsville district by the CCC/ or an independent board of enquiry into the illegal practises of directing officers to turn a blind eye to criminal activity and its lack of planning to deal with ongoing out of control crime issues.
- 3) That the investigation/ enquiry extend to the entire QPS on how they do things, especially morale, lack of retention and its lack of organisational skills, as exposed by the Auditor General's office report recently (NOV 2023) in which it stated:

**“It cannot effectively plan for:”**

- **the number of police officers, equipment, and infrastructure it needs to best deliver services**
- **where and how to best deploy its resources**

**<https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/politics/queensland/trapped-in-a-cycle-qld-police-unable-to-meet-targets-slow-to-adapt-20231130-p5eo1u.html>**

#### **Legislation:**

- 1) That “jail as a last resort” be removed from the Youth Justice Act. Not simply “reworded” and that minimum jail time is to apply to certain prescribed indictable offences.
- 2) That certain prescribed indictable offences have mandated minimum sentences for juveniles older than 12yrs of age, and that with each offence committed, the minimum jail term is increased, this should apply to:
  - “unlawful use of a motor vehicle”
  - “armed robbery”
  - “robbery with violence”
  - “serious assault”
  - “breaking and entering”
  - and “arson” (where it involves a motor vehicle or dwelling).
  - This obviously excludes more serious crimes of “drug trafficking, sexual assault, rape, manslaughter, murder, etc.. which would/ should naturally attract harsher sentencing and should fall under separate sentencing.
  - a) For a first serious prescribed offence (as listed above), we will concede that it will be up to the court to decide what sentence is given to the juvenile if any, however irrespective of a jail term or not being applied, that a minimum 6 month good behaviour bond be ordered.
  - b) For the 2<sup>nd</sup> time a serious prescribed offence occurs, that a minimum of 6 month jail term be given, along with a mandatory rehabilitation course. Upon release, a 6 month good behaviour bond be ordered along with a mandatory GPS tracker for that period.
  - c) For the 3<sup>rd</sup> time a serious prescribed offence is committed, a minimum of 12 months jail be given, along with mandatory rehabilitation course. Parole can be applied for after 10months should their behaviour be considered as well enough to be released. Upon release, a mandatory GPS tracker, while a 6 month good behaviour bond be ordered.
  - d) Should any juvenile then manage to stay out of trouble and not commit any more serious prescribed offences for the 6 month probation period, should they be arrested after the 6 month probation period, it will be considered as their “2<sup>nd</sup>” offence again and thus 6 month minimum jail term (as per section b).
  - e) That should a juvenile commit multiple “serious prescribed offences” on their “2<sup>nd</sup> chance” that longer jail terms be handed out. Multiple serious offences should no longer be considered in court as 1 combined offence and punishment applied as if it were 1 prescribed offence (ie: concurrent sentencing no longer be used where multiple serious prescribed offences are committed.)
  - f) That cutting off, damaging, not charging the GPS tracker during the probation period will be considered a minor offence which will attract a 14 day period in detention and a new tracker issued, their probation period will then be reset back to 6 months from date of release (as long as no other prescribed offences were detected).
  - g) That any juvenile caught in a group committing the above prescribed serious offences and while on a 6 month good behaviour order, be banned from associating from with other members they were caught with at the time (unless they are immediate siblings). Any

juvenile caught again within that period of time associating with members of the group they were caught with, be sent back to detention for 14 days and their probation period will then be reset back to 6 months from date of release (as long as no other prescribed offences were detected).

- h) That any juvenile caught committing a minor offence while on a 6 month good behaviour period (eg: minor theft (items stolen which exceed \$100), vandalism, trespassing, public affray, assault, associating with other juveniles they are banned from seeing.. etc) be given a minimum 14 day stay in jail and their good behaviour period reset to 6months upon their release (as long as no other prescribed offences were detected).
  - i) That any theft of a vehicle which involves an assault or while armed or threats made using weapons (ie a "carjacking" or "home invasion") adds a minimum of 50% extra to minimum detention time.
- 3) That "cautioning" is no longer an option for police when it's a serious prescribed offence "unlawful use", "armed robbery", "robbery with violence", "serious assault", "breaking and entering", "arson" and the offender is older than 12yrs of age. Far too many juveniles are simply being driven home after being caught by police in stolen vehicles, this is not acceptable to the community. ANY juvenile caught in a stolen vehicle is to be charged with unlawful use, even if not driving said vehicle.
- 4) That a remand center for juveniles be built on the outskirts of Townsville (not co-located at CYDC) to house up to 30-40 juveniles, this will take pressure of the watch house and CYDC. Whilst in remand juveniles will be given schooling, medical and only the very basic amenities while waiting to attend court. Small juvenile remand centers should also be built at other major towns to avoid wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars/ flying time of government aircraft in shuffling them around back and forth between Townsville and Brisbane.
- 5) That naming and shaming of criminal teens (for teens older than 12yrs of age) who have committed the previous prescribed offences, be allowed by the media once the case has been heard and dealt with, once they have appeared in court on their "2<sup>nd</sup>" time.
- 6) That juvenile court no longer be closed and out of bounds to the media or to the victims of such crimes and that at anytime without permission, victims and media be allowed to sit in. The right to a public hearing incorporates the principle that justice should not only be done, but be seen to be done, by subjecting legal proceedings to public scrutiny. **QPS OFFICERS STILL TO THIS DAY DO NOT GIVE OUT COURT DATES OR NAMES OF OFFENDERS TO VICTIMS OF CRIME, this is not acceptable.**
- 7) That any government funded mobile phones and internet access given to convicted criminal teenagers to cease immediately.
- 8) That when a teenager turns 18, his previous juvenile record is no longer completely sealed, but in part be left open to show any offences committed when he/she was 17yrs of age and upwards. This will indicate to the court that the trend of offending is continuing despite the teenager now an "adult" and therefor should not be thought of as a "first time offender" when appearing in "adult" court because their previous juvenile record being sealed closed.

- 9) That also while in detention mandatory drug testing (hair follicle testing) be carried out and that procedures be put in place to have mandatory drug rehabilitation programs carried out while in detention as part of their rehabilitation.
- 10) That legislation be enacted that teenagers under the age of 16yrs cannot lawfully leave (run away) their parents/ legal guardian's home unless there's mitigating circumstances and so ordered by the court, that the teenager be removed from the parent/ guardians. This is to provide parents/ guardians with rights to collect their child should they run away from home, as opposed to having no rights to collect their own children which is the situation now. This will also line up with current legislation that a child remain in school until 16yrs of age (or complete year 10).  
(The ability for the government to take away a child under court orders should a parent be failing in their responsibilities is not affected by this legislation)
- 11) That teenagers with serious criminal history not be placed into "resi-care" homes in suburbia upon their release, while on bail, parole etc.. The safety of residents is to take precedence over teen criminals. Alternative arrangements should be made in regards to their release and that constant rehabilitation be part of their release program.
- 12) **That legislation be enacted to make it a crime for ADULTS to:** procure juveniles to commit crime, be in company with juveniles while committing the above prescribed offences. Adults committing such an act to be given a minimum 2.5yrs jail term. This legislation is important as many adults (including drug dealers and drug couriers) use juveniles to carry drugs, steal items for them etc. Many adults are seen in stolen cars which are handed back and forth between juveniles and also encourage them to commit crime on their behalf.
- 13) That section 408A of the QLD Criminal code be amended "UNLAWFUL USE OR POSSESSION OF MOTOR VEHICLES, AIRCRAFT OR VESSELS" to have a minimum of 12months for the 1<sup>st</sup> offence for an adult offender and then doubles to a minimum of 2yrs for a 2<sup>nd</sup> offence. For a 3<sup>rd</sup> offence it doubles again to 4yrs jail minimum. We have often seen sentences for unlawful use given as low as 6months, despite the adult offender having extensive criminal history, including stealing multiple cars in the past. And that if multiple serious offences are presented in trial, that concurrent sentencing no longer allowed for car theft when presented with other serious crimes.
- 14) That any theft of a vehicle carried out by an adult, which involves an assault or while armed or threats made using weapons (ie a "carjacking" or "home invasion") adds a minimum of 50% extra to the minimum detention time.
- 15) When the previous Newman LNP government was in power, that it enacted a "three strikes policy" to social housing tenants. This legislation was removed by the ALP government. We demand this legislation be reintroduced to the Residential Tenancy Act. Criminal families are being harboured constantly in social housing and despite constant complaints to housing commission about this criminal activity, nothing is ever done about it. The surrounding suburbs then suffer the consequences of being broken into constantly, hooning by stolen cars, drug dealing etc..  
**(I was originally involved in helping run the petition to introduce the 3 strike policy which was presented to the then Bligh government and who rejected it. It was then picked up by the Newman government and introduced)**

## Police Procedures:

- 1) That with immediate effect the Police Procedures manual be amended to remove the following from CHAP 15:  
**(v) the driver of the pursued vehicle is a child, unless the reason for the pursuit and the circumstances are so serious it is necessary that the child be immediately detained.**

It seems no matter how much danger the community is in, QPS officers refuse to do their sworn duty because of this nonsense clause and continue to be ordered to turn a blind eye, thus have allowed the crime to flourish to incredibly dangerous and violent actions here in Townsville, this is unacceptable.

- 2) That a “breaker squad” of properly equipped QPS vehicles and trained officers be created to deal with the sole purpose of stopping stolen vehicles/ or wanted persons (adults). These officers to be trained by US specialists to perform pit manoeuvres and limited pursuits. Vehicles to be specially equipped to deal with use of force against another vehicle in order to stop that vehicle. A squad of 6 - 8 special vehicles (2 officers each) would be sufficient to deal with stolen car situation in Townsville. This special squad could be incorporated into the “Tactical Crime Squad” as part of their duties.
- 3) That all senior officers be reminded that ALL police officers hold discretionary power and that they can not take that away from junior officers and that officers are reminded that their service is about protecting the community from rampant criminal activity is their utmost priority.
- 4) That regular independent audits be not only be carried out on QPS state-wide as a whole, but on individual QPS districts in order to see who is performing / or under-performing.
- 5) That “QPS ethical standards” no longer deal with external complaints of a serious nature of officer behaviour in order to main transparency. That the CCC stop referring serious complaints about police, back to police to “investigate themselves”.
- 6) That QPS Townsville have someone employed to update the community properly via their MyPolice page and their facebook page about criminal activity ON A REGULAR DAILY BASIS. Approx. 4 yrs ago the daily stolen car list and break and enter list was dropped and updates of wanted persons disappeared from the MyPolice page dedicated to the Townsville district. On the odd occasion the MyPolice page does get updated with a couple of media releases but this appears to have been done mainly from Brisbane. Typically its also done very late, especially when there are missing persons, or a dangerous situation occurring.
- 7) That the current 000 redirection to the “next available” operator no matter where in QLD they are, isn’t working. It is pointless to speak to someone in Brisbane and try and describe a well-known Townsville location which is not known to the operator who maybe sitting down in a call center in SEQ. There has also been a high number of times where 000 QPS operators has taken up to 5-8mins to answer a call. There has also been a huge number of times where operators have hung up on people or misdirected them to police link when reporting a crime in progress. We therefor also demand an external review into QPS call centres and an immediate push to employ more trained public servants/ officers into call centres.
- 8) QPS officers in Townsville have also been responding lights and sirens, sending multiple crews to “resi-care” homes for children as young as 5yrs of age having a tantrum. These are not isolated. A child having a tantrum is not a police issue and a waste of police resources. This sort of



wasted resources is utterly not acceptable when more serious crime is occurring. Children “playing up” isn’t a police issue. “Resi-care” is a rort and waste of public money. “Carers” are told not to interfere or act like guardians to the kids they have in “care”. An investigation into “resi-care” and how it operates is required as well.

9) That a total review of how POLAIR is being used in Townsville. It appears the helicopter is being used as “patrol vehicle” and can be seen flying for hours on end (non-stop, other than when refuelling). This is a waste of resources and money. Questions should be raised as to why its flying ALL day (and ALL night)? What is the point of spending 10s of thousands of dollars every day for little to no result?

10) **MEDIA BLACK OUT AND A LACK OF COMMUNICATION:** As far back as 2004 the Crime and Corruption Commission wrote a report titled “STRIKING A BALANCE - AN INQUIRY INTO MEDIA ACCESS TO POLICE RADIO COMMUNICATIONS - DECEMBER 2004. As far as we can determine NONE of these recommendations were carried out. We demand that this old report be looked into again and the recommendations be acted upon. Recently digital radio was rolled out across the Townsville district.

This has caused essentially an almost complete media black out on reporting of crime situations because the media is unaware of unfolding situations, for example when a stolen car crashes into an innocent member of the public, a stolen car set on fire, an armed robbery, siege etc...  
<https://www.ccc.qld.gov.au/publications/striking-balance-inquiry-media-access-police-radio-communications>

**QUOTE FROM THE FRONT PAGE OF THE REPORT:**

*The recent adoption of encrypted digital radio communication technology by the Queensland Police Service promises to provide a number of important benefits to police, including increased coverage and improved security of communications. However, one of the consequences of this new technology is that media organisations will no longer be able to listen in to police radio communications, which will prevent the public from having access to information on police activities through media reports.*

*In the wake of the Queensland Police Service’s decision to begin a roll-out of digital radio technology, the Crime and Misconduct Commission was asked to determine what level of access, if any, the media should have to police radio communications.*

*This gave the Commission a unique opportunity to examine the interplay between a number of critical principles which lie at the very heart of social and political life in this state. The current inquiry has required the Commission to consider the issues of freedom of the press and the media’s role in a democratic state, within the context of modern policing.*

*The Commission’s standpoint is that government information should ordinarily be available to the public unless there are compelling reasons, in the public interest, to the contrary. In considering the release of police radio communication information the Commission has balanced individual privacy, operational security and public safety considerations against the need for high levels of transparency and accountability in policing.*

*I am confident that the report’s recommendations strike an appropriate balance in the public interest.*

**Brendan Butler SC**

**Chairperson**

**VICTIMS OF CRIME:**

- 1) That victims of crime who have no insurance (thanks again to the ever increasing insurance costs because of the rampant crime here a lot of people can no longer afford to have insurance) be compensated for their losses and damages:
  - a) For individuals/ couples: that all towing and recovery costs of their stolen vehicle be the responsibility of the state. And that any vehicle which is not damaged beyond repair, be professionally cleaned (forensically cleaned) before its return to the victim.
  - b) For individuals/ couples: that those on a pension, low income (below \$66,667 pa threshold) have 100% cost recovery for installing new locks, upgrading security, any damage repairs to the home etc. Those who have a combined income of \$66,667 to \$126,000 pa can apply for up to 50% cost recovery.
  - c) For Small Businesses owners (as per ATO definition) : that up to 50% cost recovery be available to them for damage only caused by ram raids involving stolen vehicles and security upgrades (bollards etc).

**PERSONAL DEFENCE:**

- That small containers of Pepper Spray/ be made legal for use for self defence by adults in QLD and only purchased/ in possession of, by persons over the age of 18yrs. Sale of such sprays be limited to gun shops.

The previous Townsville ALP MPs were totally unapproachable and not interested at all in the rampant crime situation being presented to them, in fact many many residents were also being blocked on the local MPs social media pages when questioned about crime.

Email responses (when they bothered to reply) were simply canned responses with the usual “slogans” and lip service.

You’re responses here will be very indicative of your concern about what is happening to this community.

Be advised that any responses with references to the UN is invalid and erroneous.

Lets be clear, Queensland is not a country and not a member of the UN. The UN is not our government, you are!

Townsville’s juvenile crime is now out of control and it’s apparent that this is deliberate and callous agenda, to what end we don’t know.

However we the residents of this city will no longer sit idle and allow this town to be destroyed no more. We the residents expect all our demands to be met.

I expect an answer to my demands be made within 2 weeks.

Regards....

**Salvatore Costanzo**

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