

Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

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Submission – The Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024.

Submission – 3 December 2024

My name is [REDACTED]. I am a mother of three children under the age of 18 years. I am also, importantly a teacher, and someone who experienced youth crime first-hand in Townsville. I can discuss the publicly known aspects of my case – an unprovoked assault with a large hunting knife at my neck, and then theft of my car. This occurred at 8am on an ordinary day in May as I entered my school grounds in broad daylight. Teachers, parents and children were arriving to start their school day, witnessing an event that has changed not only my perspective on life, but my family's.

Two of the three accused are female adults. The other is a juvenile male. It was the juvenile who wielded the very large knife and drove my car. Age is no barrier to driving a large metal weapon on the road, as my car is alleged to have been used in further crimes outside another school.

My QPS Victim Engagement Officer provides regular updates for progression of the case. I have had no rights to attend the multiple court cases to date – at last count there were ten. I have no rights to the accused's criminal history or what led the actions of that day. I cannot contextualise or rationalise their actions. The accused have not heard my victim impact statement, nor my teenage daughters' perspective of how life has changed.

Losing the material aspect of my car has financially impacted us. Insurance companies do not care that you had not control over the theft, so aspects like a \$900 excess are still charged with no semblance in the payout of the true value of car that I owned outright. It is the insidious ongoing psychological battle of PTSD that is the daily internal battle.

We chose to move back to Townsville seven years ago, having grown up here, and seeing it as a safe and community-based alternative to Sydney. I chose to move to teaching 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 access to private education and need that teacher that welcomes them every day with open arms. I chose to undertake additional trauma studies to help my students. What I did not chose was to be a teacher who sees and experiences first-hand the behaviours and stories of the students that have led to this problem.

My PTSD is so significant that I literally felt broken. 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 I see from children as young as 12 at school is unfortunately no longer alarming. Our front-line workers – teachers, GPs, nurses, paramedics, lawyers – are all experiencing either primary or secondary trauma from youth crime. This then passes to be generational trauma impact to 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, casual use of highly abusive language, and a place of rite of passage in gang crime progression. I welcome the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 with open arms, but can we please also address exactly what is leading to having to introduce such a Bill? The impact of offending on victims, to be addressed in the Charter of Youth Justice Principles, is important but is 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 beautiful 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 brains have greater cognition and ability to process such violence is no longer possible. My daughter undertook a project at school this year about youth crime – 97% of her classmates 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, teaching of empathy, teaching of options alternative to violence – I implore that these must be part of this much needed Bill.

For many children engaging in crime, they perceive their actions as victim-less crimes with no faces. Accountability, empathy – these are critical elements to the success of this Bill. The rights of children engaged in crime are no greater to the rights of children, or adults, impacted by the crime.