

Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

Submission No: 160
Submitted by: Townsville Chamber of Commerce
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Northtown Level One
280 Flinders Street
P O Box 1114
Townsville Qld 4810

T (07) 4771 2729
W www.townsvillechamber.com.au
E members@townsvillechamber.com.au



Tuesday 3rd December 2024

Statement for the Government Inquiry on the Making Queensland Safer Bill

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this significant issue and for holding a public hearing in Townsville, the only location outside Brisbane. We commend the Government for recognising the importance of engaging directly with our community on this matter.

While the Chamber is not positioned to offer an opinion on all aspects of this Bill, as the independent voice for nearly 400 business members and the wider business community in Townsville, it is our responsibility to highlight the broader impact 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, 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 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 impact of crime also extends 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.

Additionally, the high cost of insurance in North Queensland compounds the issue. Many businesses have increased their excesses to reduce premiums, leaving them to absorb recurring expenses for broken windows and stolen stock, which come 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.

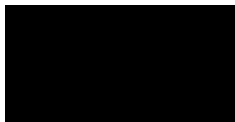
We understand from meetings with stakeholders that a group of repeat offenders known to police are responsible for a significant proportion of offenses, with some reoffending while awaiting sentencing for previous crimes. This is unacceptable and impacts countless unseen victims.

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.

Sincerely,

Yours sincerely,



Heidi Turner
Chief Operating Officer
Townsville Chamber of Commerce