

Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

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Every Queensland
community deserves
to be a liveable one

19 March 2026

Mr Martin Hunt MP
Member for Nicklin
Chair
Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee
JICSC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Chair,

RE: LGAQ Submission – Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body which represents all 77 councils across Queensland.

We thank the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee for undertaking this Inquiry into the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, which has strong interest from our member councils.

Please find **enclosed** a copy of the LGAQ's submission for your consideration, on behalf of our members, noting that individual councils may also lodge their own submissions as well.

The LGAQ welcomes the opportunity to appear before the Committee if hearings are scheduled and confirm that our submission may be published on the Committee's website. Please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Vogler, Head of Advocacy via email [REDACTED] should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of Alison Smith.

Alison Smith
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



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Submission to Justice, Integrity and Community
Safety Committee

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About the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body for local government in Queensland. It is a not-for-profit association established solely to serve councils and their needs. The LGAQ has been advising, supporting, and representing local councils since 1896, enabling them to improve their operations and strengthen relationships with their communities. The LGAQ does this by connecting councils to people and places; supporting their drive to innovate and improve service delivery through smart services and sustainable solutions; and providing them with the means to achieve community, professional and political excellence.

Equal Partners in Government Agreement

The LGAQ on behalf of all 77 Queensland local governments is a signatory to a three-year Equal Partners in Government Agreement¹ with the State of Queensland (signed 11 March 2025).

The Agreement details the key principles underlying the relationship between the state and local governments and establishes the foundation for effective negotiation and engagement between both levels of government.

The Agreement acknowledges that local government is the closest level of government to the community, affecting the lives of everyday Queenslanders and acknowledging Local Government as a genuine partner in the Australian government system.

The intent of the agreement was to continue the tradition of working in genuine partnership to improve the quality of life for all Queenslanders to enjoy. By identifying the roles and responsibilities of each party, it provides a solid foundation for effective negotiation and engagement between both levels of government.

The LGAQ is committed to working with the Queensland Government and will continue to be a passionate advocate for councils, to serve our joint jurisdiction for the people of Queensland.

Rural and Remote Councils Compact

The Rural and Remote Councils Compact² signed on 14 August 2025 is a sub-agreement to the Equal Partners in Government Agreement, between the LGAQ and the Queensland Government.

It provides a platform to ensure issues of priority for these communities are properly considered by the Government when developing policies, programs, and legislation. The Rural and Remote Councils Compact, pledges to amplify the voice of and improve outcomes for the state's 45 rural and remote councils and their local communities by enhancing engagement between both levels of government.

¹ The Equal Partners in Government Agreement is available online [here](#).

² Rural and Remote Councils compact available online [here](#).

Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

1. Executive Summary

The LGAQ welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 (the Bill). Local governments are increasingly impacted by metal theft, in particular copper and it's emerged as a persistent and increasingly organised form of criminal activity across Queensland. Councils are responsible for the management and maintenance of a wide range of public infrastructure, including sporting facilities, street lighting, community assets, water and energy infrastructure, all of which are frequently targeted due to the accessibility and resale value of copper. The financial, operational and community impacts of these offences are significant and extend well beyond the intrinsic value of the stolen materials.

The Bill proposes a suite of reforms aimed at disrupting the theft, sale and disposal of stolen metal, including increased penalties for relevant offences, the introduction of new offences relating to attempted metal theft and possession of suspected stolen metal, strengthened identity verification requirements for scrap metal transactions, and enhanced transaction recording obligations for second-hand dealers. The LGAQ broadly supports these measures and acknowledges their intent to strengthen deterrence.

Evidence provided by councils and Queensland Police Service data indicates a sharp rise in copper theft in recent years, with impacts felt acutely at the local level. Theft of copper has disrupted sporting clubs, schools, residential developments and essential services, creating public safety risks, service interruptions and additional financial pressures on councils and community organisations. In many cases, councils are required to divert limited resources to repair damaged infrastructure or provide interim solutions, placing strain on already constrained budgets.

While supportive of the Bill in principle, the LGAQ considers that further reforms may be required to ensure the regulatory framework effectively addresses the drivers of metal theft. In particular, the continued use of cash transactions within the scrap metal industry, limitations in identity verification under previous legislative settings, and inconsistent national approaches across jurisdictions have contributed to the ease of resale and limited deterrence for offenders.

Overall, the LGAQ supports the intent of the Bill and recognises it as a positive step toward mitigating the growing problem of metal theft in Queensland. The LGAQ looks forward to continued collaboration with the Queensland Government to ensure the legislative framework delivers meaningful reductions in metal theft, protects community infrastructure, and supports safer and more resilient local communities across the state.

2. Recommendations

While the LGAQ supports in-principle the amendments relating to the disruption of metal theft, the LGAQ considers that the Bill can be strengthened and provides two recommendations for the consideration of the Committee, which are summarised below:

- **Recommendation 1:** The LGAQ recommends the State Government amends the Bill to prohibit scrap metal dealers from paying cash for scrap metal.
- **Recommendation 2:** The LGAQ recommends the State Government amends the Bill to prohibit scrap metal from being sold to businesses other than registered scrap metal dealers.

3. Introduction

The LGAQ welcomes the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 which amongst other things, disrupts the theft, sale and disposal of stolen metal as scrap metal.

The Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 also:

- amends the Criminal Code to increase penalties for certain offences typically charged in relation to metal theft (stealing, wilful damage and receiving tainted property);
- introduces two new offences for attempted metal theft and possession of a prescribed metal item reasonably suspected of being stolen;
- introduces a circumstance of aggravation applying to metal theft during natural disasters;
- inserts a definition of 'scrap metal' into the *Second-hand Dealers and Pawnbrokers Act 2003* (Second-hand Dealers Act);
- imposes additional photographic identity verification requirements under the Second-hand Dealers Act on second-hand dealers transacting in scrap metal;
- modernising offences under the Second-hand Dealers Act for failing to report suspected stolen property to police; and
- requires all transactions involving scrap metal, regardless of value, to be recorded in the transaction register.

4. LGAQ Response to the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

The LGAQ welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the Bill amongst other things, relating to the disruption of the theft, sale and disposal of stolen metal as scrap metal. In preparing this submission, the LGAQ has considered previous LGAQ Annual Conference resolutions and direct feedback provided by Queensland councils.

4.1. Nature and scale of copper theft

Copper is a valuable metal with excellent electrical conductivity that can be recycled repeatedly without losing quality, thus, making it a highly sought after commodity in the scrap metal market.

Metal theft, and copper theft in particular, has emerged as a persistent, increasingly organised and widespread form of criminal activity across Queensland. While incidents range from opportunistic thefts to coordinated and repeat offending, the primary driver is the high resale value of copper rather than the intrinsic value or function of the assets from which it is stolen.

Readily accessible infrastructure (e.g. housing, sporting fields), combined with strong demand within the scrap metal market, has made copper theft an attractive and low-risk activity for offenders. The scale of copper theft has grown significantly in recent years, affecting metropolitan, regional, rural and remote communities alike.

Local governments report increasing frequency and sophistication of offending, with repeat targeting of the same sites, thefts occurring during overnight hours, and damage extending beyond the removal of copper itself. In many cases, offenders deliberately vandalise or disable infrastructure to extract copper components, resulting in damage that far exceeds the value of the stolen material.

The impacts of metal theft are significant and far-reaching, imposing substantial financial and operational burdens on councils, utilities, businesses and government agencies. Local governments bear the direct costs of repairing damaged infrastructure, replacing cabling, restoring services and implementing temporary safety measures.

These costs can be considerable, particularly where assets are repeatedly targeted or where damage occurs to complex or critical systems. In addition, councils must divert staff time and operational resources away from planned works, maintenance programs and community services to respond to theft incidents and associated repairs.

4.2. Impacts of metal theft

Queensland Police Service (QPS) data also shows a sharp rise in copper theft, in particular over the past two years. Since January 2025 there has been more than 200 copper thefts reported to police³. In March 2023, Queensland energy providers reported that thefts and attempted thefts of copper from the statewide energy infrastructure network had nearly tripled between 2020 and 2022.

In its 2023 submission to the previous Transport and Resources Committee, Parliamentary Inquiry into Scrap Metal Theft, the City of Moreton Bay⁴ noted copper theft was on rise and targeting new housing estates, energy infrastructure and local sports clubs around south-east Queensland.

Copper theft affects sporting fields, schools, farms, energy and water supplies, and community venues. Local community organisations and sporting clubs, in particular, have faced significant copper theft in recent times, which has also placed pressure on councils to provide support in terms of replacement infrastructure and the use of alternative materials where appropriate.

Beyond the financial impacts, copper theft gives rise to serious broader social and community consequences. The removal or damage of electrical and telecommunications infrastructure

³ [Operation Whiskey Biome targets copper wire theft, Townsville area - Queensland Police News](#)

⁴ <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/com/TRC-645B/IQ-6634/submissions/00000002.pdf>

creates heightened public safety risks, including the potential for serious injury or loss of life. For example, it was reported in early March 2026, that a man was taken to Toowoomba hospital after suffering life-threatening burns from being stuck by an 11,000-volt line while attempting to steal copper wire.

Lighting outages caused by metal theft on roads, pathways and sporting fields increases the risk of accidents and crime, while damage to power and telecommunications networks can disrupt emergency services, business operations and household connectivity. These risks are particularly acute when the theft occurs during severe weather events or natural disasters, when reliable infrastructure is critical for public safety and emergency response.

Copper theft also has a disproportionate impact on community organisations and volunteers, including sporting clubs and not-for-profit groups, which often lack the financial capacity to quickly repair or replace damaged infrastructure. In many cases, councils are required to step in to provide interim solutions or financial assistance to ensure community facilities remain usable, placing further pressure on local government resources.

Collectively, these incidents cause widespread inconvenience and frustration for communities, undermine confidence in the reliability and safety of public infrastructure, and contribute to a perception of declining amenity and security.

Over time, the cumulative effects of copper theft erode the resilience of local infrastructure systems and divert limited public funds away from essential services, renewal programs and community priorities.

The growing scale and complexity of copper theft highlights the need for stronger deterrence measures and a more robust regulatory framework to disrupt the resale pathways that enable this criminal activity to persist.

5. Case studies

City of Moreton Bay

In April 2023, over 320 metres of copper cable was stolen from the Narangba Demons Baseball Club. This left the club's 17 teams and 200 players unable to train in the evenings - its primary training time.

Similarly, in 2022, the adjacent Narangba Eagles Soccer Club, which has over 700 members, had copper cabling stolen from its fields three times within six months, leaving its 60 teams from across all age groups unable to train.

In July 2023, parts of the North Lakes street lighting network were subject to blackouts due to copper theft. A North Lakes school also had its cabling removed from lighting poles on its grounds and sporting fields earlier this year.

Council has been unsuccessful in the application of CCTV to track and monitor copper theft within the region.

Logan City Council

Copper cable theft has resulted in prolonged lighting outages along several major transport corridors in the Logan region, creating significant road safety concerns for motorists. Media reports indicate that thousands of drivers have been affected by the loss of lighting along sections of the Pacific Motorway, the Logan Motorway, and the Mount Lindesay Highway, where copper wiring associated with street lighting infrastructure has been repeatedly targeted.

According to the Logan City Council, outages on state-controlled roads in the area date back to late 2024, with thefts frequently occurring at major interchanges, highways and roundabouts. The Mayor of Logan, Cr Jon Raven, noted that the repeated removal of copper cabling had led to extended periods without lighting, increasing safety risks for motorists travelling through these high-traffic locations, and his office has raised this with the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads since 2024.

Local governments have begun implementing mitigation strategies where possible. For example, Logan City Council has started replacing copper wiring with aluminium in some council-managed infrastructure to reduce the likelihood of further theft, as aluminium has significantly lower resale value. However, similar changes can be more complex to implement on state-controlled road infrastructure managed by the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Community concerns regarding road safety have been repeatedly raised by residents and local representatives, particularly where lighting outages have persisted for extended periods. Temporary signage warning motorists of lighting outages due to theft has been installed in some locations, highlighting the ongoing impact of copper theft on public infrastructure and road safety.

Townsville City Council

The Townsville region has experienced two instances of metal theft during natural disasters.

In early 2025, suspected copper theft resulted in deliberate damage to telecommunications infrastructure in the Townsville region, including the cutting of fibre cables in and around Deeragun. The incident occurred while a tropical cyclone warning was in place for Far North Queensland, significantly heightening the risks associated with service disruption. Mobile and NBN services were impacted across Townsville's northern suburbs of Mount Low, Bluewater, Black River and Saunders Beach, affecting approximately 5,000 customers, including households, businesses and critical community services.

The timing of the theft had serious public safety implications. Telecommunications are essential during natural disasters for emergency alerts, access to emergency services and coordination of response efforts. State and local government leaders publicly condemned the incident, noting that the loss of communications during cyclone preparations placed lives at risk and undermined emergency readiness at a critical time.

Telecommunications providers were required to divert technical crews to urgently restore services, delaying other maintenance and repair work across the network. Providers highlighted that copper theft can leave customers disconnected for extended periods and

imposes significant operational and economic costs on both service companies and affected communities.

A similar incident then occurred early in 2026, during preparations for Tropical Cyclone Koji, again disrupting key telecommunications infrastructure.

As the above case studies show, local governments and the Queensland Police Service have identified copper theft as an ongoing issue affecting multiple forms of critical infrastructure, demonstrating the need for stronger deterrence, prevention measures and protection of essential services, particularly during disaster events.

6. Regulatory and market factors

Regulatory and market factors play a central role in enabling and sustaining copper theft across Queensland. High and fluctuating commodity prices have increased the resale value of copper, while strong demand within domestic and international recycling markets provides ready outlets for stolen material.

These market conditions are compounded by regulatory settings that have historically allowed cash transactions and limited traceability within the scrap metal industry. Together, these factors create an environment in which stolen metals including copper can be quickly and easily converted into cash, significantly reducing the perceived risk for offenders and contributing to the growth and persistence of copper theft.

Copper is sold to scrap yards for between \$7 and \$14 per kilogram depending on type and condition of the copper. Evidence suggests the growth in copper theft is driven by the limited regulatory requirements for scrap metal industry recycling (i.e. use of cash for transactions), the relative ease in theft due to copper accessibility (i.e. sports field lighting) and escalating metal prices.

Presently, there is no requirement under the Second-hand Dealers Act to require sellers to pay via electronic transaction.

The use of a cash payment to a second-hand dealer undermines the application and consistency of a transactions register, which is a requirement under the Act (Section 37(1)).

The LGAQ notes the Bill amends the Second-hand Dealers Act to impose additional photographic identity verification requirements which aims to ensure second hand dealers, obtain accurate information about the person selling the scrap metal. A seller or provider of scrap metal will be required to provide their name, date of birth and residential address.

Copper theft is largely driven by the ease with which stolen copper can be resold through scrap metal markets. The high commodity value of copper, which can be sold to scrap dealers, combined with strong demand from recycling markets for use in electronics, construction and manufacturing, creates a strong financial incentive for offenders. Once stripped, copper is difficult to trace, as insulation and other identifying features can be easily removed, further reducing the risk of detection.

Police and industry stakeholders have consistently noted that there is no shortage of buyers for copper scrap, making resale quick and relatively uncomplicated. This combination of high

value, strong demand, limited traceability and ready access to buyers creates a low-risk, quick-cash opportunity, making copper theft attractive to both organised criminal groups and opportunistic offenders.

- **Recommendation 1:** The LGAQ recommends the State Government amends the Bill to prohibit scrap metal dealers from paying cash for scrap metal.
- **Recommendation 2:** The LGAQ recommends the State Government amends the Bill to prohibit scrap metal from being sold to businesses other than registered scrap metal dealers.

7. Conclusion

The LGAQ supports the intent of the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 and acknowledges the Bill as an important step toward addressing the escalating issue of metal theft across Queensland. The proposed measures to increase penalties, introduce new offences, and strengthen identity verification and transaction recording requirements will assist in improving deterrence, disrupting resale pathways and supporting enforcement agencies.

However, given the scale, persistence and organised nature of copper theft, the LGAQ considers that further targeted reforms are required to deliver meaningful and sustained reductions in offending.

In particular, prohibiting cash transactions for scrap metal, and limiting sales to registered dealers only, would significantly strengthen the regulatory framework and reduce opportunities for stolen metal to be laundered through legitimate markets.

The LGAQ looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with the Queensland Government to ensure legislative reforms support councils to effectively protect critical community infrastructure.

8. Contact Details

Please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Vogler, Head of Advocacy via email [REDACTED] should you wish to discuss any aspect of this submission.

Appendix

LGAQ Annual Conference Resolutions

The LGAQ is committed to member driven advocacy and working with member councils to build stronger local governments and more resilient local communities.

The Local Government Association of Queensland's Annual Conference resolutions endorsed by member councils each year form the roadmap for the LGAQ to advocate for the policy positions and funding priorities councils believe are critical to ensuring Queensland flourishes and our communities thrive.

The Annual Conference resolution relating to scrap metal theft as endorsed by Queensland councils at the LGAQ 2023 Annual Conference is as follows:

2023 Annual Conference Resolution

Resolution 20 – New Scrap Metal Legislation to Limit Copper Theft

The LGAQ calls on the State Government to update all relevant legislation, including the *Second-hand Dealers and Pawnbrokers Act 2003*, to mitigate the rise of copper theft in Queensland.