

Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

Submission No: 013

Submission By: City of Townsville

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19 March 2026

Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

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Dear Chair,

RE: Townsville City Council Submission - Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

Townsville City Council (**Council**) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the metal theft related amendments contained within the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 (**the Bill**).

Metal theft has become a persistent and increasingly dangerous criminal activity across Queensland and Townsville is not immune. Council is supportive of the Bill's intent to disrupt the theft, sale and disposal of stolen metal through strengthened penalties, new offences, and enhanced regulatory oversight of scrap metal transactions. These reforms are critically important to help deter metal theft and reduce the subsequent public safety risk, financial loss and community disruption.

Accordingly, this submission is confined to the metal theft components of the Bill.

Public Safety & Inconvenience

Townsville has experienced repeated and serious incidents of metal theft that have directly threatened community safety. The most serious case occurred in the northern suburbs of Townsville during the lead-up to Tropical Cyclone Koji in January 2026.

On that occasion, alleged copper thieves cut cabling at telecommunications sites causing widespread outages in suburbs including Mt Low, Bluewater, Bushland Beach, Black River, Toolakea and Saunders Beach. This occurred at a time when residents were undertaking cyclone preparations and resulted in thousands of people losing phone and internet connectivity at a time when they most needed it to stay updated on the potential natural disaster. These thefts not only disrupted essential telecommunications, but required emergency replacement of more than seven kilometres of damaged fibre optic cable.

This criminal behaviour put an entire community at risk and demonstrates the serious consequences posed by metal theft. The Bill's proposed aggravated penalties for metal theft occurring during, or in anticipation of, a natural disaster adequately reflect this heightened risk.

Beyond the direct safety risks and costs, metal theft causes substantial inconvenience and economic harm for households, businesses and essential service providers.

Council regularly receives reports from residents and businesses affected by outages or service interruptions caused by the stolen or damaged copper cabling.

Cost of Metal Theft to Townsville City Council

Council has suffered major service disruptions and incurred additional costs due to metal theft across the LGA. Metal theft is becoming more and more prevalent, meaning that the cost to Council to repair and replace damaged infrastructure will likely continue to increase.

Location	Date	Incident Description	Cost
Irrigation at Beach Access 9	Jul 2024	Vandalism - irrigation.	Pending
Townsville Stadium	Oct 2024	Theft - irrigation.	\$3,805.18
Mountview Drive	Jun 2023	Vandalism and theft - internal copper pipelines.	\$6,480.56
Ross River Dam Rangers Compound	Jul 2021	Theft - heavy duty copper electrical cabling.	\$2,500.00
Cay Street Park	Jan 2022	Theft - irrigation.	\$4,183.82
Airport (cnr Wirraway and John Melton Black	Oct 2021	Theft - irrigation lines. Replacement required - 120m.	\$55,783.10
TCC Garbutt Operations Centre, 130 Hugh Street	Jun 2020	2x Large Copper Cable Spools stolen/damaged. Copper cable was stripped and taken.	\$700.00
TOTAL			\$ 73,452.66

New Penalties

Council supports the Bill's proposed increases to penalties for stealing, wilful damage and receiving tainted property where the offence involves valuable metal items.

Of particular note is the 25-year maximum penalty for metal theft or wilful damage that endangers life or health, or occurs during, or in the lead up to, a natural disaster. Given

Townsville's high exposure to severe weather events, Council considers this aggravated penalty necessary and proportionate.

The 14-year maximum penalty for metal theft that disrupts public infrastructure is also strongly supported. Recent incidents have shown that even minor thefts can have a significant impact on telecommunications, transport and energy networks.

New Offences

1. Attempted Metal Theft

Council supports the creation of a standalone offence for attempted metal theft, with a maximum penalty of seven years' imprisonment. Attempted theft of wires or cables, even if unsuccessful, can still disable essential infrastructure and cause extensive damage.

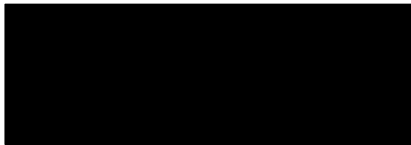
2. Possession of Prescribed Metal Items Reasonably Suspected of Being Stolen

The new offence targeting possession of catalytic converters, diesel particulate filters and cabling or wiring is an important preventative tool. The three-year maximum penalty is appropriate for an offence aimed at intercepting stolen metal before it enters the scrap-metal market.

Conclusion

Council supports the metal theft provisions of the Bill and appreciates the Committee's consideration of this submission.

Sincerely



Cr Nick Dametto
Mayor of Townsville