

Youth Justice Reform Select Committee inquiry into youth justice reform in Queensland

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Submission on Crime Issues in Rockhampton Region

As a former mayor of the city of Rockhampton and later as Mayor of the broader Rockhampton region, I write this submission based on both personal experience and the stories shared by members of our community. Over my 16 years in office, I have witnessed the evolving landscape of crime, particularly concerning youth crime, and it has never been as concerning as it is now. I want to emphasize that this is not a media exaggeration; it is a harsh reality faced by our residents on a daily basis.

I have personally heard accounts from individuals, such as a woman whom I have known for years, who was left shaken after a terrifying encounter with youths attempting to break into her home. Another recounted the trauma of having her car broken into, leaving emotional scars that still persist. Community gatherings have become platforms for sharing such distressing experiences, highlighting the pervasive fear and insecurity felt by many.

The emergence of social media groups dedicated to monitoring suspicious activities in our neighbourhoods underscores the extent of the problem. Residents regularly exchange information about the movements of young individuals engaged in criminal behaviour, with stolen cars becoming an all too common occurrence within our communities. This pattern is not unique to Rockhampton itself; similar issues have been reported in neighbouring areas like Gracemere.

It is worth noting that both Rockhampton and Gracemere have state-run residential care homes, which seem to coincide with the areas bearing the brunt of criminal activities. This raises concerns about the placement of repeat offenders in these facilities, which are embedded within residential communities. Recent discussions about relocating repeat offenders to regional areas as a solution only compound our worries. We reject the notion of using regional communities as dumping grounds for urban crime problems.

Our communities deserve respect and support from the government in addressing these pressing issues. We cannot continue to endure the negative impacts of crime while solutions are sought elsewhere. I urge policymakers to consider alternative approaches that prioritize community safety and well-being, rather than merely shifting the problem from one area to another. Rockhampton and its surrounding regions have had enough, and it is time for meaningful action to address these challenges.