



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (6.50 pm): I am pleased to contribute to the debate on this very important piece of legislation, the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which unfortunately for many across our state will not go far enough. It will not leave them with confidence that they are safer in their home or walking their dog down the street, that their property is protected or that they can wake up tomorrow knowing their car has not been stolen and been involved in a fatal accident. This legislation takes some small steps at a time when parts of our state, in particular North Queensland, are screaming out for some real action. I support the amendment foreshadowed by my colleague the member for Burdekin that the opposition is pleased to contribute as part of this debate. It is in line with community expectation across this state.

Tragic circumstances precipitated this bill's introduction. I note that the minister outlined them. It should not have taken multiple tragic circumstances for government to act. It should be about early intervention and prevention. While I acknowledge that the ministers have outlined that considerable funding—another \$100 million—will be allocated to this very challenging societal situation confronting our state, we have already seen the state government invest half a billion dollars. In spite of that half a billion dollars, we have seen recidivist offenders and an increase in the severity of their crimes. A cohort of 10 per cent now account for nearly 50 per cent of the significant and serious youth crime across our state.

I draw the attention of the House to a simple risk matrix of community safety, looking at the likelihood of risk and the consequence of the impact of that risk. Sadly, we have seen that played out in the tragic loss of lives, the continuous rate of crime, the break and enters of homes as well as stolen vehicles that parade at high speed across regional Queensland, risking people's lives.

The principal features of this legislation are to provide the legislative framework required to trial the use of electronic monitoring devices as a condition of bail for some offenders aged 16 or 17 years who have committed a prescribed indictable offence and have been previously found guilty of one or more indictable offences. I share the concerns of QCOSS, outlined in the committee's report, in that a pilot of an electronic monitoring program for 16- to 18-year-olds held in New York City was labelled a failure. While I do not want to assume, I certainly will be looking with interest and monitoring the outcome of this trial.

I do not know whether the government has considered the societal way in which youth offending is taking place. It is all about social media. It is all about taking things to the next level. It is all about the way in which they ratchet up the dangerous activity they undertake. This trial—\$39 million will be allocated for the rollout—has not considered that these devices can easily be removed, that young people will need access to a charging station or that young people will need access to a mobile device. Ironically, we have assumed that these people come from a mum-and-dad family that cares about their whereabouts. There are a lot of assumptions in this legislation such that we will see it fall short in the coming months.

I also highlight the level of investment as part of the reforms the government is so proud of, one of which was significant in the lead-up to estimates last year. I refer to the failed bail houses, in particular the amount of crime that occurred from this situation. What a disaster! That this was announced on a day on which the opposition would have interrogated the program's failings was incredible when it comes to transparency. I refer to the three years in which bail houses were operational. Members may not think this has contributed to the high rate of crime or had a generational impact on young people. I say that it has. Some 5,648 offences were committed by 210 young people post bail house. While I give credit to the minister, who acknowledged that it was not successful, it was not a good return on investment for taxpayers at a cost of \$30.8 million and two consultancy reviews that had to tell the government that bail houses were failing. We are still wearing the results of that, with continued recidivism of young people.

I want to highlight to the House the impact of crime. I refer to the committee report and the consultation process undertaken. I thank the committee for travelling the state. I am pleased to be engaged with the people of Townsville and North Queensland. My office receives numerous phone calls from them because of the inaction of their state MPs. They were very pleased that the committee travelled and took the time to listen to their concerns and hear about the fear they live in every single day. That fear is now being translated into my own community as we see these repeat offenders consistently travel from Townsville to Mackay. They are not happy enough stealing cars in Townsville; they now steal cars in Mackay and its northern beaches. Recently, 11- to 14-year-old youth offenders from my electorate were travelling around in stolen vehicles that were later found in Townsville. When I was in local government, the then mayor had his car stolen and dumped—repeatedly.

What of the number of serious offences and the fact that they now have an economic cost on small business owners? I spoke to a mowing franchisee who is hastily awaiting this legislation, because their small business relies on having a vehicle and a trailer. What happened only a few weeks ago in Mackay? It was stolen. There are no consequences. The same youth offender, who is under 16 years of age, has repeatedly offended—and with no consequences.

While my colleagues have outlined the detail of the bill—I am sure many more will—I will focus on how this bill will practically translate to mums and dads, to the elderly in Townsville living in fear in their homes and to families of young teenagers not being supported, not knowing where to turn and what to do. I do not want people to assume that this is just about young people who do not have a family, because I know many people—several of my constituents—whose young people have fallen by the wayside under the influences of youth recidivism. They see that as an alternative to going to school and taking responsibility for themselves. Unfortunately, these families do not know where to turn. I hope the government's investment in support services does a little bit better than it has in the last five years with the half a billion dollars of investment, because there are many who are not seeing that investment across our community.

I also want to make mention of a very dear friend and colleague of mine whose husband was stabbed just over 12 months ago in the township of Sarina by a repeat youth offender after that youth offender had been let out time and time again on bail and only now is locked up. That man nearly lost his life. If it were not for the doctors who took immediate action, he would not be here today. This legislation needs to protect individuals whose lives are under threat.