




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Ms KING** (Pumicestone—ALP) (3.02 pm): I rise to provide a contribution in support of the Strengthening Community Safety Bill. In particular, I want to speak in support of the very substantial investments in early intervention, prevention, stronger action against offenders and supporting victims that this package and the legislation underlying it contains. The importance of supporting victims is where I want to focus my contribution today because we know so well that being a victim of crime can be a life-changing trauma. Having your home broken into—as I have had myself in years past—or your car stolen is a terrible feeling. How much worse would it be to experience a physical assault? People who have experienced these crimes have had their safe places violated. If their vehicle has been taken or damaged then their independence, their work and their transport have been put at risk. How much worse and more painful it must be when offenders are found to have boasted about the commission of their crimes on social media. It would be an absolute violation and profoundly disturbing and distressing to victims. I am glad this legislation sends a message that this kind of callous behaviour, this boasting about crime, is completely unacceptable by introducing increased penalties.

As we have heard repeated so many times today and yesterday in this debate, every member of our community deserves to be safe in their home and their community. People who have been victims of crime deserve to know they are seen and heard and that their concerns and fears are acknowledged. These are core values for our government and for us as members of the Australian Labor Party.

In particular, I think it is important we do all we can as leaders to speak honestly about crime and its impacts, to acknowledge its impacts, but never exploit victims or whip up fear for improper purposes. Representing the electorate with the oldest demographic in Queensland, I am glad that the measures in this bill and the package that goes with it will improve people's sense of safety, and that is especially important to me. I particularly welcome the inclusion of funding to help older Queenslanders improve their home security so they can feel as safe as possible.

The home assist package has been a huge success in my community, and I have long supported a program similar to that package with a focus on providing practical assistance so that older people can improve the safety and security of their home. This program, which has been funded to the tune of \$15 million, is very substantial and will be run as a trial over three sites. Helping people on limited incomes pay for help to fix security issues in their homes, for example, by upgrading locks, adding CCTV or strengthening shutters, will make a real difference to older people in all of the communities that have the benefit of the trial. Ultimately, we know that the people most likely to be victims of crime and the people least able to afford to protect themselves against crime are people on low incomes, although I will note that statistically young people are also highly likely to be victims of crimes committed against each other.

I welcome the proposed review of the Victims of Crime Assistance Act as well as the \$9 million increase in funding to Victim Assist Queensland to increase support for victims of property crime where they have experienced violence or threats of violence. I also welcome the hundreds of millions of dollars

of investment in diversion and early intervention programs that are included in this package. My understanding is that, since we came to government in 2015, upwards of \$1 billion has been invested in this space. Contrary to claims by members of the LNP during this debate, including the member for Kawana and the member for Scenic Rim—in fact, multiple members; I think it was in their talking points—Labor's focus on investments in diversion and offender rehabilitation programs is deeply and profoundly about victims. It is about preventing further crime and preventing people becoming victims in the first place.

We do not talk about these programs out of some misplaced sense of the primacy of offenders of crime in the context of young people committing crimes; we talk about them because we know that repeat offenders are the people who are committing the majority of crimes in our communities or a very substantial proportion of those criminal acts. We want to ensure that by getting those young people onto the right path we are preventing the commission of further crimes against our vulnerable people, our low-income people and our young people. That is why we continue to focus on these issues. It is about doing everything possible to prevent young people committing further crime and avoiding more people becoming victims.

Crime is so incredibly complex. Frankly, if it was easy to fix we would have done it already. There is so little in the broad scope of history that can be done by a government to come between a person and the moment they commit a crime. Governments are not issued with a magic wand upon their election, nor are MPs. It is worth noting that the passing of these laws and all of the measures and funding packages attached to them will not lead to the end of all crime. We know—the LNP knows—that crimes will continue to happen because there is only so much governments can do to prevent crime.

That is why I think the tone of this debate has been very disappointing at times. As I think the member for Macalister said, it has lacked nuance. I was really disturbed to hear the member for Mirani's comments about crime being caused by a lack of male role models when we know that young people committing crimes are very often not returning to their homes because their homes are not a safe place and very often that is because of domestic violence. I think in many cases it is not a lack of male role models; it might be a lack of safety due to the people living in their homes.

I also note the member for Mirani's comments about the ability to just ask social media platforms to stop spreading videos or posts about young people committing crimes. It is again profoundly lacking in nuance and not very representative of the world we live in. In many cases we cannot get social media companies to take down profoundly disturbing footage of terrorist acts. Asking them to take down posts about individual crimes has not proven an effective approach in the past. While I would love to see it, we have to recognise that we live in a globalised world. His claim that these kinds of videos and photos are useful as evidence may well be true, but it really misses the point that seeing images of robberies or assaults perpetuated through the social media universe is profoundly disturbing and harmful to victims, and that is why this kind of behaviour needs to stop.

When it comes to the lack of nuance in this debate, it is telling that on the one hand we have the Greens which are on the record as wanting to defund the police, get rid of prisons and reduce criminal consequences for young people who commit crime; and then we have the LNP, and I sometimes question their motivation for constantly raising issues of crime. When listening to the debate, I have heard them reel off examples of crimes that they have encountered in their community or that their communities have experienced, and it would seem to me that their deliberate purpose is to create as much fear as possible in our communities.

When the LNP wash up in our communities to talk about crime, they are not there for our communities; they are there for themselves. I saw it in my community when a serious assault occurred last year. Moments later, there was the member for Broadwater, the Leader of the Opposition, in our community Facebook groups creating as much fear as he could possibly muster amongst our community about crime. There was not an intention to try to calm the situation. It led to calls for citizen patrols. It led to racist slurs about the First Nations community in my area that do not commit crimes. It was profoundly disturbing. I call on the LNP to bring a more genuinely constructive approach to the discussions of crime.