




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (12.07 pm): I, too, rise to address the Strengthening Community Safety Bill. It is very clear yet again that the Palaszczuk Labor government missed the mark when they made legislative changes back in 2015 to insert detention as a last resort as a principle and remove breach of bail. It is very clear that the Premier went missing in January when the people of Queensland needed her to turn up most. Now it is very clear that they have missed the mark yet again in this legislation in that it does not even deliver what the Premier herself said it would. If honourable members want proof of that, they need go no further than the joint media release issued by the Premier, the Minister for Police and the Minister for Children and Youth Justice on Thursday, 29 December. The first line reads—

Violent juvenile car thieves will face 14 years' jail in a suite of increased penalties aimed squarely at keeping the community safe. We can show them that that is simply not true by looking at the legislation we have before us.

Whilst they say that section 175 of the Youth Justice Act states that under a magistrate juvenile criminals can only be imprisoned to a maximum of one year, under a judge juvenile criminals can only be imprisoned to a maximum of five years and in serious cases juveniles can only be sentenced to half the maximum sentence applied to adults. No violent juvenile car thief will face 14 years jail as a result of this legislation. I acknowledge the members for Clayfield and Burdekin for pointing out this falsehood. The people of Queensland need to be aware that the Labor government talk tough when it comes to crime but they do not deliver. Again these laws show that.

I mentioned that the Premier went missing in January. When the parliament needed to sit again and we needed to pass these laws back then, she went missing. Even now, she is not delivering. In January alone across the Sunshine Coast police district, there were 69 unlawful uses of a vehicle, 149 unlawful entries and 628 other thefts. If I look at the other end of the Glass House electorate, in the Moreton district—that also covers the electorate of Pumicestone—in January alone there were 119 unlawful uses, 258 unlawful entries and a whopping 994 other thefts. When we could have been here in parliament debating legislation to get tough on these young crims, the Premier was elsewhere, and in that time we have seen nearly 1,000 thefts in the Moreton district, in one month alone.

It is important that we understand. We often talk about the young criminals—I will come back to them shortly—but we do not spend enough time talking about the victims of crime. I have been in this House now for five terms, for 14 years. Crime has always been an issue. In some parts of the state, particularly in places like Townsville, it has been a constant issue—apart from the term under the LNP government when we addressed crime on the ground.

What we see across the state now, though, is that if you yourself have not been impacted by crime you at least know someone who has. You sit down, as I did, with a good friend to hear how they sleep with a golf club or a cricket bat beside their bed, worried that their house will be invaded. You hear how they make a decision between leaving the car keys hanging from the peg beside the front

door so that if they do get invaded at least the young crims are not running through the house trying to find the keys, or trying to hide them to make it harder to lose that precious vehicle that they have fought so hard to purchase in the first place.

Mr Lister: We hear it all the time.

Mr POWELL: I take that interjection from the member for Southern Downs. It is now the first topic on the minds of everyone across Queensland, and it has not happened by accident. It goes back to those actions of the Palaszczuk Labor government in 2015 and their inability to toughen the laws ever since, despite the rhetoric we hear from them. Victims of crime are the people we should be thinking of. They are the ones we should be assisting. As the member for Nanango said, some victims have been left battered, bruised, bloodied, knifed. It is not acceptable. Some people have had to bury loved ones. That is not acceptable. My fear is that, even with these legislative changes, they will continue to have to do that.

I acknowledge the police on our front line. They do a fantastic job with the resources they are given by this government. I know that my local officers based out of Caboolture, Woodford, Beerwah, Maleny and Palmwoods as well as Nambour work tirelessly to keep our community safe. I know that, for many of them, one call-out to a domestic violence situation is all it takes to write off a whole shift. That means we do not see them around the communities as much as we would like to. That is not their fault. It is because of the laws and the resources they have been given by the government.

I heard the contribution by the member for Ferny Grove. He suggested that we are not seeing a cut in police officers at the Ferny Grove station or at the Sandgate station. Tell that to the community and tell that to the police officers themselves. They know that they are operating short staffed. An approved level of staffing does not indicate that there are actually police officers in those stations. We are hearing this from the police officers themselves. We are backing them up. We know that they are doing it tough, and we will continue to support them.

I return to victims of crime. I mentioned what happens when you as an individual, a family or a business owner are impacted by crime, but it has a flow-on effect to every single Queenslanders. We spoke about it yesterday in question time, when we asked whether this government will take responsibility for failing to act on crime and, therefore, the associated increase in insurance costs that every single Queenslanders is paying. At a time when everyone is struggling with the ballooning cost of living and the ballooning bills we are having to pay—whether it be water, rego or electricity—we then get slugged with higher insurance bills. Insurance premiums are jumping in many cases more than 100 per cent because of inaction when it comes to crime.

I used to work in the department of child safety and I know that some of these young people have had very challenging and dreadful upbringings. In some instances, you know that what has been done to them has actually—

Mr Nicholls: It is unforgivable.

Mr POWELL: It is unforgivable; I take that interjection from the member for Clayfield. It is important that we have prevention and early intervention services. When I was working in the department of child safety we were often told that \$1 spent in prevention and early intervention would save \$100 in intervention at the pointy end. That is why we instigated the Carmody review into child safety. That is why there were so many recommendations, many of which this government has failed to implement, around improving prevention and early intervention services—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr POWELL: I take that interjection. The member for Clayfield, as the treasurer, put \$400 million into those services because we knew that was an investment for the future. Those on the other side can say, 'We've put in \$800 million,' or 'We're now putting in \$1.2 billion,' but we know that those programs cannot be working if we continue to see the results we are seeing. This is why the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow police minister have written to the Auditor-General, calling on him to investigate how effective these prevention and early intervention services are. I am pleased to hear that the Auditor-General is going to undertake that review. If we are going to spend that much money, we need to know that it is actually producing results. If it is not, then we need to redirect it into programs that are. We need to help these kids with these complex issues so that we do not end up with a pipeline of young criminals continuing to run rampant across the state of Queensland.

We need to address this problem at all ends of the spectrum. We need prevention and early intervention, we need to work with the parents, we need to work with the communities and we need to work with the kids, but it does not take away from the fact that there is a small number of young individuals who are creating mayhem, chaos, havoc and despair across the state of Queensland. We will support these changes but we suspect that, yet again, they will be a toothless tiger in this fight against youth crime.