




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2023

**STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL**

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (12.18 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023. The proposed legislative responses in the bill are designed to break the cycle of offending by serious repeat offenders, with stronger penalties that will support the efforts of police and the courts to reduce offending and hold criminals accountable. They are part of a suite of new tougher action on youth crime and its causes. The Queensland government understands the impact that youth crime is having on our community. That is why tougher action is being taken to further protect community safety and to tackle the complex issues of youth crime.

In speaking in support of the bill in this place, I want to pay tribute to the victims of crime in our state. I have spoken with many victims of crime in my electorate and it has given me a greater understanding of how very traumatic it can be. After my car was broken into, my parents' house was broken into and my partner's car was broken into, I had an even deeper understanding. Being a victim of crime can be an awful experience. Not only is there a financial and property impact; there is also a substantial emotional impact. Anger, frustration, grief and fear are all emotions that victims I speak to experience—including my parents. I also want to pay tribute to the police, the youth justice officers, corrections, social workers, youth workers and everyone in Queensland who plays a role in trying to support young people to live happy, healthy and productive lives.

I could talk in this place about how this bill takes tougher action on youth crime and its causes. I could talk about how the bill targets serious repeat offenders who put community safety at risk, how the definition of 'serious repeat offenders' is being changed, increasing penalties, more offences with a presumption against bail and strengthened conditional release orders. I could talk about the \$34 million in high-visibility police patrols, the \$15 million to help senior citizens with the costs of securing their homes and more funding to support victims of crime. I could talk about the expansion of youth justice co-responder teams or the expansion of On Country programs, intensive case management for repeat offenders or the new \$100 million investment in grassroots early intervention with more community based initiatives targeting at-risk youth to provide recreational, learning, mentoring and drug and alcohol support to help break the cycle of offending. I could talk about how community safety is at the core of the government's response to youth crime and about how new funding is supporting more police resources and high-visibility police patrols in addition to the 12,000 police officers already on the beat protecting community safety. I could talk about how we will also do more to directly help Queenslanders with crime prevention while also being there to support victims of crime in their need.

Almost all of us in this place have children of our own or have children in our lives and I would go so far as to say that none of us would wish for them to end up in jail. None of us wants Queensland kids on the streets. We do not want them living a life of crime and drugs. We want children to live happy, healthy and productive lives and I would suggest that that is what everyone in this place wants and that is what everyone in my community wants, too. It is highly unlikely that any children are watching this debate with any level of great interest, but I have some messages from people in my community to children who may have been making some bad choices, including the 17 young Central Queenslanders

who are currently in detention. I hope that somehow these messages of support from people in Central Queensland find their way to these children so they can begin to understand that our community only wants the best for them. Yes, they have made some bad decisions. Yes, their choices have hurt many people—the victims, their families, the community. We are disappointed in some of those choices—very disappointed and hurt—but there is strong community sentiment to help support these kids to turn their lives around.

I want to put on the record in this place some of the advice from Central Queenslanders to our young people. Denis Cox offered this—

Tomorrow is the blank page of a 365 page book. Write a good one.

One small crack does not mean you are broken. It means you were put to the test and you didn't fall apart.

It's never too late to be what you might have been.

The Rockhampton Women's Shed said—

Each of us has a story, whether right or wrong! The decision to fight for a better life, better relationships, to better oneself is deep rooted within the person even at a young age, its hard sometimes to make a choice as there are so many conflicts in our lives, young ladies particularly need to learn, be mentored, be strong, be independent, believe you can achieve, be supportive and supported. Fight for what you want! There are groups and people out there who are so passionate abt this they can reach out to such as our Rockhampton Women's Shed Inc, we are compassionate ladies, willing to give time, and knowledge to those up and coming, to teach skills, teach independence, share time to those who feel alone.

Andrea Friend, a councillor from Livingstone Shire Council, offered this advice—

Forgive yourself! Say this out loud! I forgive myself!

Sandra Oram said—

Turn your negatives into positives. It's never too late to turn your lives around. Although it may not seem like it ... people do care. They can set you up on the right paths to live happy, fulfilled and meaningful lives. Life's too short to live with regrets ...

Maggie Dunstan said—

Sometimes the darkness is so deep it keeps you trapped in bad choices because it feels like there's no way out and if there is you aren't worth it. Young people need to hear that there is hope and they are worth it despite their pasts.

Jo Harris said—

Tell them it's ok not to be ok sometimes.

Just not to unpack and live there.

We all have 'experiences' in life that haven't been great. But what did we learn. What did we feel. How can we change it.

We are the only ones in charge of our actions.

Suse Lyons offered this advice—

You are worthy. You are supported. Life may have dealt you a rough hand but you have such a spark just waiting to grow. Accept support that comes your way and watch yourself shine. You are capable of good and great things. Keep going.

Brenda Mundt said—

Everybody makes mistakes. It's an opportunity to learn.

There were hundreds of comments from people right across Central Queensland who wanted to offer their advice and support and love to young people, particularly those juvenile offenders who are currently incarcerated. I want to offer my own message of hope and support as a representative of the community of Keppel: please, young people, know that we are there for you. We only want the best for you. I support the provisions of the bill which strengthen community safety and invest in early intervention. To the young Central Queenslanders in detention or living a life of crime, I say please let us help you. We support you and we want the best for you. I commend the bill to the House.