




Speech By
Bryson Head

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2023

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (3.12 pm): I must say there were three words that the member for Pumicestone forgot to mention in her whole speech, and that was ‘breach of bail’. They are words that a lot of the government members still cannot seem to utter, because maybe they just fundamentally do not believe that it works.

I rise to speak to the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023. Finally, after years of seeing disastrous crime after crime in communities all across Queensland, this government have accepted there is in fact a huge crime problem and they are in fact responsible for it. Finally, after seeing them swear black and blue that breach of bail will not work, they turn around with a backflip worthy of an Olympic medal and a run on the red carpet. You do not have to travel far to find a victim of crime in my community—mothers, neighbours, friends, children. There are hundreds of victims of crime across Callide and, yes, many of those victims would not be a victim if it were not for the failures of the Palaszczuk Labor government.

We certainly appreciate the backflip on breach of bail and know it was probably a fair risk to the Premier’s pay cheque, given she has already told her backbench that none of them are good enough for a promotion. I do wonder how many of her backbench and even her own cabinet genuinely and truthfully support this backflip. I believe they do not support this backflip and that is why they have consistently failed to mention it. For those who may not understand what breach of bail is, it is the simple matter of an offender agreeing to a set of terms and conditions as part of their release and then not following or breaching these. This government have literally taught a generation of juvenile criminals that there are no consequences for their actions—that they can agree to a contract and then ignore it within hours of release. It is failing our communities and, frankly, it is failing these offenders.

We just need to look at the crime statistics in local government areas and police districts across Callide. Banana shire is only a small shire, yet in the last three months alone there have been: 11 unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences—that is 11 people having their vehicle stolen and driven by criminals; 38 unlawful entries—that means that 38 property owners in the Banana shire alone have had their property broken into; and 66 other thefts. In Western Downs—which is a bit bigger but still a relatively small local government area—there have been 178 other thefts, 49 unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences and 98 unlawful entries to property.

In the police district of Capricornia, there have been 303 unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences in the last three months—and I wonder how many times the member for Keppel got up and told people in her community that breach of bail was not going to work—1,201 other thefts and 831 unlawful entries. On the Darling Downs, there were 283 unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences and 795 unlawful entries. In the Wide Bay-Burnett, there were 551 unlawful entries and 207 unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences. I wonder where the member for Bundaberg has been when those victims have had their property stolen.

Nonetheless, thanks to years of hard work and campaigning by the LNP, we have one measure of several that will start to make a difference to youth crime—that is, of course, the return of breach of bail as an offence. That said, it is clear that there are many things that need to be done for my community to see a serious reduction in crime. We need to unshackle the judiciary so judges are free to make appropriate decisions in the interests of community safety when offenders are in front of them in the courts. Detention as a last resort should be removed so that, if it is in the genuine interest of community safety, the judiciary can send these offenders to detention without jumping through every other hoop under the sun.

The government are also being deceitful in their claims that they have significantly increased the penalties on these criminals. These new laws do not override section 175 of the Youth Justice Act, which means that a magistrate cannot sentence a juvenile for more than 12 months. We also know, as is the right of the judiciary, that it is incredibly rare that maximum sentences are enforced.

Only a few months ago, the Premier came out and claimed they were going to introduce the toughest laws in the country—so it was easy to think that finally this government had accepted, firstly, that they watered down the laws and created the problem in the first place and, secondly, that they are actually going to get serious about fixing it. To every Queenslander who had their hopes up I say I am sorry, but we have been seriously failed by this tired, lazy, red carpet chasing, dodgy Labor government once again. This was a big opportunity and we tried hard to capitalise on it, but this government did not even let us move amendments to this bill, and that just shows how much they continue to listen to Queenslanders!

Mrs Gerber: They refuse to debate it.

Mr HEAD: That is right. I take that interjection from the member for Currumbin. They refuse to even debate it. Various members of the government have said hundreds of times, either in front of cameras or in their communities, that they do not support breach of bail because it apparently would not work. So much did they believe it would not work that they spent eight years campaigning against it.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr HEAD: I wonder how many times the member for Logan told his community that breach of bail as an offence would not work, and now he has to turn up and say why his own government has brought it in as law.

Mrs Gerber: He led the charge. He signed the petition.

Mr HEAD: There you go! The member for Sandgate was up in front of a camera less than 24 hours before the Premier backflipped on breach of bail, swearing black and blue to the camera that breach of bail would not work, yet here we are. The Deputy Premier was a bit late getting the memo perhaps or maybe the decision was an incredibly last-minute backflip. The Minister for Water, the member for Gladstone, has been pretty silent on the issue. I wonder how many times he has told his community that breach of bail would not work. These government members all voted early in the week to ensure the rights of offenders remain greater than the rights of victims. What an absolute disgrace. They would not even let us debate the amendments.

I wonder how many members of the government have refused to speak on this bill because they fundamentally do not believe in breach of bail. On the other hand, members of the LNP have been firm in this push to see breach of bail returned as an offence. We, the LNP, will always push for measures that will strengthen community safety because we believe that every Queenslander has the right to feel safe in their own home. Our members absolutely and fundamentally support this principle. I know the member for Bonney does. I know the member for Scenic Rim does. I know the member for Chatsworth does as well.

Mr McDonald: What about me?

Mr HEAD: Member for Lockyer, I take that interjection. I know you absolutely support good crime policy and that is why you are supporting the return of breach of bail. The Minister for Police has spoken about the difficulties in recruiting. Do you blame people for not signing up to the Queensland Police Service because of the weak laws of this government? They add monitoring and tracking bracelets for juvenile criminals into the so-called toughest laws in the country, yet in two years they only fitted eight bracelets.

When it comes to recruiting and keeping communities safe, it is a little ironic that the former attorney-general who was responsible for watering down our crime laws, failing Queenslanders, is now failing the safety of Queenslanders yet again with the state of the health system. The minister tore up laws which worked which led to the current crime epidemic, and now she is the one responsible for the

disgraceful failures in the health system. The minister continues to say those problems are because of staff shortages. That is contrary to what medical professionals have told me. They will not work for Queensland Health because they do not want to work for a dud minister who was a dud attorney-general and is now a dud health minister. If only the Strengthening Community Safety Bill strengthened the safety of mothers in the electorate of Callide and in the electorate of Gladstone. I am happy to continue this fight for my communities.

We will not be opposing this bill and we appreciate the fact that the media and the polls finally forced this government into doing something, but it falls well short of what is required to address juvenile crime in this state. We, the LNP, will continue our steadfast advocacy on this issue because Queenslanders deserve better.