




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (4.53 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023. My contribution draws on 23 years experience as both a teacher and leader within the state school system working in a variety of communities, including those with challenging and complex issues. I have learned that young people, specifically teenagers, respond positively to clearly defined and firm psychological boundaries, respond best when they understand the consequences of their actions and are hindered in their decision-making by a range of factors external to their control. These factors may include, but are not limited to: a lack of adult/parental supervision, neglect, fetal alcohol syndrome, substance abuse and addiction, learning difficulties, cognitive impairment, sexual abuse and trauma, their chronological age and cognitive development. I am yet to hear any acknowledgement of these significant factors by those opposite.

Young people require a network of relevant and appropriate support in order to be successful and exit a context of youth justice and crime. They need their parents or carers or a significant other to be a positive and constant influence in this process. They require a safe and supportive environment in which mistakes provide opportunities to learn and grow, and of course school is the ideal environment for this to happen. They would rather not disappoint; every young person wants a good life and to be the best person they can be. Young people take time to learn to make more positive decisions. They require regular daily reminders, guidance, support, positive reinforcement and feedback. Finally, of the thousands of parents that I have worked with closely, I can say that every parent, regardless of their personal circumstances and challenges, cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds, wants their children to experience a better life and to have a better future than their own. We know that postcode matters, and we also know that the issue of youth crime is strongly linked to poverty, socioeconomic status and indigeneity. It is incumbent on every member of this House to be clear in their minds of the causes of youth crime.

Short-term responses to a complex issue suggested by those opposite during their time in government may resonate politically. However, it is hard to accept that such short-term strategies will lead to long-term solutions. Strategies are required that reflect a stronger moral purpose, a systematic and strategic process, steadfast dedication, and intelligent, ethical and courageous leadership. There is no quick fix. This issue requires a broader, more sophisticated long-term response, as outlined in the Palaszczuk government's bill.

Policy and funding levers are the easy part of the equation. The public administration and implementation of these policy and funding decisions require experienced leadership, hard work and tenacity. Administering and implementing these policies requires more than just adequate resourcing. It requires the commitment and preparedness of the public service and non-government organisations which reflect the following: a strategic intent, which must be multiagency; a structure that will deliver the reforms; a strong moral purpose; opportunity to intervene early; the skills, knowledge and expertise; the right people in the right positions; a time line of strategies; and key metrics, agreed deliverables and

accountability. I commend the Attorney-General, the Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services, and the Minister for Youth Justice for their leadership and for ensuring the methodical implementation of evidence-based strategies in navigating this very complex issue.

As legislators, we must be cognisant of the relevant and recent research and the reactionary, proactive and preventive evidence-based measures. We must identify early and understand every young person and their family's story, their needs and the intervention required. We must understand and address the primary causes of youth crime. We must apply intensive case management, not just for young people but for their families. The \$56.8 million investment is a great example of this. We must establish clear lines of accountability. The \$100 million investment in evidence-based intervention, diversion and rehabilitation programs appropriate to the needs of individuals, such as cognitive behavioural sessions, along with the \$9.8 million for On Country and the \$61.5 million for Transition 2 Success will go a long way to supporting these young people. Restorative justice conferencing will receive \$65.1 million.

I urge my principal colleagues to be mindful of their school disciplinary absences. In particular, when excluding students, wraparound services must be afforded to our most at-risk students and their families. Exclusion should be avoided at every opportunity. Further, consideration of part-time enrolments in the first instance, to continue a line of sight with these students, and support for other agencies to intervene is imperative.

We, as state politicians of all stripes, must begin to redefine the language we use to describe young offenders, youth detention centres, criminals and youth crime. For example, 'rehabilitation and learning centres' sows a whole new discourse for our at-risk young people and their families.

Finally, clinical intervention must continue to occur at the first sign that a young person and their family is not coping. This may occur at birth, kindergarten age, during prep or in the early years of school. It is too late to engage clinical intervention when a young person is sentenced and enters youth detention. We must continue our interdepartmental work and early intervention processes with our young families.

All Queenslanders deserve to feel safe in their homes and in their community. We need to protect our children, protect our homes and protect our communities. Young people are the responsibility of every community. As a community, we as adults have a responsibility to protect young people from themselves and encourage their positive decision-making. Those opposite would have Queenslanders believe that addressing youth poor decision-making is easy. Queenslanders are smarter than this, and my community is smarter than this. They understand this issue is complex.

Finally, as we embark on a Path to Treaty in 2023, we must do better to address the incarceration rates of our Indigenous peoples. It is a sad indictment on our society that the colour of a child's skin is still the strongest precursor to their prospective chance of incarceration and experience with the youth justice system. We must do what is right for all Queenslanders. I support our government's youth justice strategy.