




Speech By
David Crisafulli

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2023

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Youth Crime; Minister for Transport and Main Roads

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): Eight years ago, this state government watered down the youth crime laws and, on the back of it, we have a generation of untouchables—a generation who know that their rights outweigh the rights of victims in this state; a generation who have grown up under weaker laws which they no longer fear. There was a time when they ran from the law, but now they run at it. If you want an indication of how bad the youth crime crisis is in this state, look no further than the number of hardcore repeat offenders. It was 10 per cent only a handful of years ago; today it is at 20 per cent. This shows that the government is failing young people and the community—both ends of the spectrum. It is failing young people by not giving them the opportunity to turn their life around and it is failing the community, who are having their lives ripped apart. Queenslanders know that crime is getting worse. They are feeling it in their homes and they are saying it on the streets. They have had enough. They have every right to have had enough, because it is impacting every facet of their life.

If it is not bad enough that there are weaker laws, this government has also presided over a decline in frontline full-time-equivalent police officers. It took the budget process to reveal how bad it is. There were 202 fewer police in the last year. That would be bad enough if the government had been honest about it—if it had just reluctantly admitted it—but for the police minister to have run a defence for so long—that came crumbling down during estimates—was an embarrassment for him and a disaster for Queenslanders. I will read some quotes from the minister. In November 2022 he said—

My figures are the Queensland Police Service figures, which is the actual headcount and the approved strength, and on both measures we're up by hundreds.

In November 2022 he also said—

The numbers clearly show that, year on year, police numbers in Queensland have increased.

Again in November 2022, nearly a year ago, he said—

I'm told that the pipeline of new recruits is very good.

It has not been. There are fewer men and women protecting Queenslanders. The thin blue line has become thinner, and this government has given them the cocktail of weaker laws and fewer of their colleagues. Is it any wonder that we are in the middle of a youth crime crisis?

What do the statistics show? Since this government came to power in 2015, break-ins are up 58 per cent, stolen cars are up by 108 per cent and assaults are up 178 per cent. Queenslanders are asking: where is the Premier? Today we heard the minister parade and parrot and say that everything is fine. It is not, and Queenslanders know it. They want to see consequences for action. They want to see the judiciary unshackled and the removal of detention as a last resort, and they want this state to get serious about gold standard early intervention.

The greatest barometer of the failings of this state government is the number of repeat hardcore offenders, because that shows that it is neither being strong enough with those who are holding knives at people's throats and ramming police cars nor being compassionate enough with young people to turn them around before a lifetime of crime. That is an abject failure. It is a failure that every Queenslander is now living, and they are feeling it. They are feeling it in the way they feel in their homes. They feel it in their insurance premiums. They feel it when they speak with their friends and family. They feel it when they have a discussion about where to leave the keys at home. It is hard to believe that we have reached the point that Queenslanders are not debating whether or not they can keep people out of their homes; they are debating whether or not they should make it easier or more difficult for someone to take the keys of the car they are trying to steal. Should they leave them at the front door so that their child who is asleep is not impacted, or should they hide them because they have worked really hard for it and they deserve to keep it? That is not a discussion that should be had. The discussion should be: 'Are there more police to protect me? Are there stronger laws for them to use? Does my state government acknowledge that community safety matters?' That is the discussion that should be had.

In crime, it is the cover-up that often gets you. So it is that we saw the mother of all cover-ups this morning when it came to the transport minister. The Premier said that she did not know when she found out about the \$2.4 billion blowout—the cover-up. It turns out that she found out over a month before the distribution of an incorrect figure—over a month before. Today there was one question that was not answered. It was not answered despite the minister repeatedly saying 'but I have answered that question'. Repeating that comment without answering the question provides us with the belief that the minister knows the answer. I believe that the answer is: not only did the minister see the email in question; the minister's fingerprints were all over it. Not only did the minister believe that the email was important to shape the content of what was being distributed to Queenslanders; he was the architect of it.

It is up to the minister to come into this House and say whether or not he knew about the email. At the heart of this saga—the train shame scandal—is not only whether or not this government knows how to deliver things on time and on budget but also the kinds of people who are running this state. They are the kinds of people who believe that Queenslanders do not deserve to know the truth. This is a cover-up that started in the transport minister's office and was distributed by the Premier's office. That is why the minister remains a protected species in this place. The Premier knew full well what he was up to, because she was part of the cabal that signed off on it.

This is a minister who has overseen cost blowouts on almost every project he has touched. The Brisbane Northern Transitway is the latest one. It has blown out by \$100 million. The new Gold Coast rail projects, budgeted at \$120 million only a handful of months ago, are now at \$500 million. How can a project go up 400 per cent in a matter of months? Yes, there are pressures and, yes, there is a war on Ukraine, but no-one goes to their builder and locks in a price of \$120,000 to put on an extension and then cops a half a million dollar bill. That is what the government is asking us to believe—that somehow it is business as usual that a 400 per cent blowout can occur.

That is what happens when a government is beset by chaos and crisis. That is what happens when a government is more interested in its survival than in the survival of the people who put them into office—the people who are telling us about the real pressures of the cost of living, the people who are wondering whether or not they will be able to meet their rent payments in the middle of a housing crisis, the people who wonder if they are able to keep criminals out of their home in the middle of a youth crime crisis and the people in their hour of need who are waiting for an ambulance to turn up in the middle of a health crisis.

That is the result of a government that has given up. It has given up on valuing taxpayers' money. It has given up on treating people with respect. It has given up on governing with integrity, and so we saw that this week when the Premier—despite saying lock, stock and barrel to the Coaldrake recommendations—ran away at the first hurdle when it came to a clearing house. There is a reason why, because the Premier and the ministers never wanted to have a Coaldrake inquiry. It was never about letting the sunshine in; it was only about a political pressure relief valve, and that is what it has always been about. Those opposite have never believed the health crisis is as deep as it is; it is about trying to bat it away. They have never believed that the housing crisis is as bad for working families and the vulnerable as it is; it is about batting it off as an issue. They have never believed that the youth crime crisis is as deep as it is; they just want to see the issue go away. Tomorrow people will have their voices heard because this is a government that has given up on governing for Queensland.