




Speech By
Hon. Di Farmer

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (4.05 pm): I wish to contribute to the debate on the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023. I thank the Economics and Governance Committee for their outstanding work on this bill: travelling so widely across Queensland in a relatively short period of time, hearing some difficult stories about the direct impact of youth crime on everyday Queenslanders, hearing strong views on the absolute polarities on this issue and recommending a way forward. I thank them and I commend them and particularly their comments regarding further support for victims of crime. I welcome the Premier's commitment as a result to reviewing the Victims of Crime Assistance Act with a view to greater support being provided, which will be on top of the \$9 million of additional support to victims of crime which has already been announced, including \$3 million to boost counselling capacity and support NGOs building on the existing Victim Assist service.

I point out this comment from the committee in particular. Although we know there has been real effect from the many intervention programs we have put in place to address youth crime—for instance, restorative justice conferencing where 77 per cent of participants did not reoffend or decreased the magnitude of reoffending; intensive case management where there has been a 71 per cent reduction in the proportion of crimes against the person; Transition 2 Success where 67 per cent of all participants did not offend or reoffend within 12 months of completing their course—although victims know that the overall numbers of unique offenders is declining with the majority of young people who have contact with the youth justice system not reoffending after the first contact and although it is important to know that these things are working, if you have been a victim of youth crime, lost a loved one, been fearful inside your own home, or wondered if you will ever feel safe again then probably you do not feel personally comforted by these figures and you will need real support to deal with that. Although you might feel sympathetic to the fact that of the 17 per cent of young offenders who commit almost 50 per cent of the crime, most, if not all, would have lived life characterised by domestic violence, poverty, homelessness, substance abuse and disengagement from education. Literally no child is born bad. They are children who have literally probably never had a single person walking their life alongside them and will have suffered much other extreme disadvantage. I know the people of my community understand this about these young offenders and they are sympathetic, but if they have been victims of crime then they will possibly never feel quite the same again and that is why this support that we can offer to those victims is so important.

In 2018 the highly respected former police commissioner Bob Atkinson delivered to government Working Together, Changing the Story, which was a way forward for youth justice reform and at that time and in response the government committed half a billion dollars to a range of initiatives, including preventative and early intervention measures as well as tough laws and a commitment to build further detention centre capacity. The billion dollar quantum our government is now referring to for youth justice initiatives includes those commitments, so many of which are now bearing fruit. In preparing that report, Bob Atkinson said that any measures around youth justice reform must be bookended by community

safety and community confidence. I think we all agree with that. It is why we need to keep addressing both sides of the argument on this difficult, complex issue. We need to keep the community safe. We need to address the issue in the longer term so those people do not stay in the cycle of crime. We need to provide a chance to those young people for a different life.

It is why the legislative changes that are being debated this week strengthen and build on the operation of some of Queensland's current youth justice and criminal laws, including around breach of bail, strengthening conditional release orders, a new declaration of serious repeat offenders, increasing penalties for stolen vehicles and expanding the number of offences with a presumption against bail. They are all so important and they must be accompanied by our commitment of more than \$332 million to programs that divert children away from crime such as expanding intensive case management, expanding youth co-responder teams and early action groups, the On Country program and our investment in grassroots early intervention. We need to keep young people from the cycle of crime in the longer term and we need to keep our communities safe.

On the local front, before I finish I want to give a shout-out to Senior Sergeant Dave Buttram and his team from the Morningside police who have made a giant effort and are achieving so much for our community. I know they will do much more.