




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (6.45 pm): Tonight I rise to contribute to the debate on the Strengthening Community Safety Bill. I acknowledge the work of the committee that was involved and thank those Queenslanders who made a contribution to its inquiry. The government understands the impact of youth crime on our communities and that is why we are taking new and tougher action to further protect the community and tackle the problem of the complex causes of youth crime in Queensland. This bill is about providing a stronger response and more consequences for young people who are serious repeat offenders. It is only one part of the government's \$322 million investment in addressing youth crime in Queensland. From Cooktown to Cloncurry, from Coolangatta to Charleville and at home in my community of Gladstone the aim of these measures is simple: to ensure that Queenslanders and their communities are safe.

These legislative reforms are targeting the small cohort of serious repeat young offenders who, as we have heard from many speakers, are responsible for a large proportion of youth crime and require intensive effort to change their trajectory. This bill contains reforms to strengthen the operation of some of Queensland's youth justice laws. Importantly, it also contains significant additional investment to ensure programs that divert children away from crime will continue in this state. This is about continuing the work to reduce the overall number of unique youth offenders. More than \$88 million will be available for programs delivered by non-government organisations and \$66 million will be provided over two years for priority police initiatives including extreme high-visibility patrols, online and engagement teams and specialist youth crime rapid response squads.

I want to speak about one change in particular that will see it become a crime for a young offender to breach a condition of their bail. There has been a lot of commentary and hysterics from those opposite calling for a reintroduction of former section 59A of the Youth Justice Act. I want to be clear: this was not a breach of bail offence in Queensland. The reality is that the LNP never legislated a breach of bail offence for young offenders when they were last in government. They did not do it. It is just another attempted retelling of the Newman government's history from those opposite. This bill amends section 29 of the Bail Act to expand the application to youth offenders. Section 29 of the Bail Act has worked effectively with adults in this state for more than 20 years.

My twin brother is a police officer in Gladstone. I have spoken with him about how these laws will impact his work in our community of Gladstone. It is simple: if the court has determined the necessary bail condition then those conditions and breaching them should be taken extremely seriously. Police officers will still have discretion and can use diversion options, but this is about the police having the necessary tools to deal with serious repeat offenders in our communities. This is about saying to those serious repeat offenders, 'If the magistrate says that you have to be home by nine o'clock then you must be and if you are not allowed to be with particular people then that will be enforced as well.'

This is about taking consequences seriously and keeping the community safe. We are talking about a very small portion of young people. There are very few young people who are offending and most young people who have contact with the youth justice system do not reoffend, but that minority accounts for half of all the youth crime. Queenslanders want those changes made, and that is what we are doing here tonight. Queenslanders expect to be safe in their communities and in their homes. Queenslanders expect governments to step up and handle these tough issues, which is what the Palaszczuk Labor government is doing. I commend this bill to the House.