




Speech By
Jim McDonald

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2023

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (2.37 pm): The LNP is listening to Queenslanders and we are hearing Queenslanders and their fear of crime right across the state. Back in January, the Premier did not turn up when the LNP called for parliament to be recalled so that we could debate these laws and bring them in immediately, and even now she has not turned up with the right laws for Queenslanders. In fact, the maximum penalty, as she promised Queenslanders, was going to be 10 years, yet in these reforms it is going to be only seven.

I was the officer in charge of police at Laidley for many years. In 2015, when these laws started to be watered down, I could see the frustration felt by operational police. Some of those opposite would like to believe that the LNP do not care about the vulnerable in our community, but I can tell you that I was very proud to be part of a wonderful program that is still going in Lockyer called Together 4341, which is a partnership between the Hatton Vale State School and the Laidley District State School where they work to assist parents coming into the school. In fact, they have a real focus on the zero to five age group and assisting their parents. That program was put in place because of the level of vulnerability which existed in the Lockyer community, both in Gatton and in Laidley, as measured by both the Public Health Network and, before that, Medicare Local. We knew something had to be done, and I was pleased to be part of that.

We need to have those wonderful, early intervention programs operational across the state. There also needs to be laws in place which give police the ability to deal with recidivist offenders, those for which those opposite say the breach of bail provisions would not work. They said it would not work up until a couple of weeks ago. Obviously the polls showed they were not being strong enough on crime and they decided to change their policy.

I say thank you for copying the LNP's homework, because we know that breach of bail as an offence should be reinstated and youth who are committing criminal offences like adults should be dealt with like adults. The police are very frustrated—they have been frustrated for so long—and we have seen youth crime grow out of control. Those opposite said that breach of bail did not work because 94 per cent of offenders reoffended. That is not evidence that breach of bail is not working; it shows that they are recidivist offenders and the worst of the worst. Police need the laws to deal with them. It is a revolving door, but we need to keep working at it and give the police the tools they need. Then when police see the worst of the worst offender out at night or in a shopping centre during the daytime looking around and breaching their bail because the order says they should not be in the CBD of one of our towns, they need the laws so they can remove them from that system instead of continually triaging—as I said, a revolving door—until they end up in an adult jail and for a longer period. That is the sad reality for these 570—we now know; it was 470 last year—of the worst of the worst offenders right across the state.

That is just one aspect of the laws. Since 2012 we have seen police numbers per 100,000 of population—and these details are available in the *Report on government services*—decrease. Back in 2012 there were 290 police per 100,000. In 2021 there were 285 police per 100,000. I am looking

forward to the updated report being released soon to find out exactly what it is now. With a population of 5.3 million, that already equates to 265 fewer police officers. That is over 500,000 operational police hours in which police could have been taking proactive action to deal with those offenders using the right laws to keep our community safe.

Recently I heard a lady say, 'Where do I hide my keys?' For goodness sake, people are absolutely horrified and frozen with fear that somebody is going to barge into their house to steal their keys so they can steal their car because now the keys are required to drive the car away. These brazen offenders do not discriminate. They do not care where this happens. Fortunately for me in the Lockyer and my community, we do not have a large problem with these sorts of criminals. They are usually driving from Ipswich to Toowoomba or from Brisbane or the coast to Toowoomba or elsewhere. Sometimes they do stop because they run out of petrol, and next minute one of our people in the shopping centre or at home is a victim of a crime.

As I mentioned earlier, there needs to be—and we respect—early intervention programs. I support our leader's recent call for a review of all of those early intervention programs. Our deputy leader wrote to the Auditor-General and he has agreed to do a review of those programs. It was \$800 million and I believe it is now heading towards the \$1 billion mark. Let's review those programs, see what works and what does not so we can replicate what works across the state.

To those opposite who proudly say that the boot camps the LNP instigated did not work, I say read the KPMG report. It did not say that. It said the time frame was not sufficient to judge the effectiveness of the program and that some of the programs were not tailored to the specific needs of the kids. Let's get the planning right. Let's get the funding right. Let's get programs associated with the seriousness of the offences and let's deliver early intervention programs right across the state that work. That is a simple solution.

The other thing we need to do is unshackle the judiciary. Having detention as a last resort, which we have called on the government to do over and over, needs to be put in place so that the magistrates and judges do not have their hands tied but can hand down appropriate sentences for these offenders. As I said before, the Premier promised Queenslanders one thing and they have received something else. They do not have the laws they need. Those opposite have been talking about having the strongest laws in the state. However, they have weakened the laws so much that they could only go back a little bit in terms of making bail presumption a last resort. Those things are just playing around the edges. Seeing breach of bail return is a great thing and I know the police will welcome that. It will give them the tools to deal with these offenders day after day, night after night.

I must say, when we hear people ask the question, 'Where do I hide my keys?' we know the system is broken. I do not want to live in a state like that. Queensland is a great state and we need to be a great state again. We do not need our communities living in fear of those 570 recidivist offenders who are racing across the state, committing offences and killing people whilst on bail. Anybody opposite who is trying to defend that is completely out of touch and is not listening to Queenslanders. They are certainly not listening to the Queenslanders in my community or the communities we have seen across the state. I can tell honourable members that it is only when the resources are given back to the police—and remember, we are already down 265 police officers. Let's see the next report that comes out. I bet the ratio is lower than 285 per 100,000; that will multiply out. We heard in estimates last year that proactive policing where police go out and try to catch offenders was down 40 per cent in some districts. That is not just because of these youth offenders; it is also because of the time they have to spend in carrying out civil processes. If they had picked up a youth offender two weeks ago, they would have had to make a civil application for an exercise of the power under the Youth Justice Act, taking them off the road for hours. There is a similar process of frustration when it comes to dealing with domestic violence, but that is a debate for another day.

People should not be prisoners in their own home. I know that crime is a terrible thing, but I can tell honourable members from the studies and the experience I have as a former long-term police officer that one thing worse than crime is the fear of crime. We all have people in our community who have boarded up their homes and are living in fear—total fear—with doors and windows locked day and night. Our community deserves better, and it deserves an LNP government that will be fair dinkum in listening to Queenslanders and delivering the laws and resources they need.