




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2023

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (12.41 pm): I rise to support the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023. Before beginning my contribution, I must reflect that on a comprehensive nuanced bill that this is—it is quite ironic to have to follow the member for Kawana who lacks any sense of self-reflection, any sense of nuance at all when it comes to criminal law reform. The member for Kawana, in a few questions this week, has quoted the Auditor-General's opinions or reports with no self-reflection of what the Auditor-General said about the member when he was attorney-general—the worst attorney-general ever. There was the blowout in costs for boot camps under the LNP, in addition to the cost of the member's helicopter flight. It is not just the report itself, but it is the response from the member for Kawana, or lack of response, and the disdain he showed to the Auditor-General, only for the Auditor-General to say, 'without any paperwork of evidence-based decision-making; I can only assume there was none.' That is paraphrasing, but that is close to a quote of what the Auditor-General said about the member for Kawana and his approach to youth justice.

He displays no self-reflection when his own party leaked 'Operation Boring' where they had to keep him quiet six months before an election, and it did not work. That is a matter for their partyroom and their promotion of the now Deputy Leader. What does that say about them? He is the man who leaked confidential conversations with heads of jurisdiction.

Government members interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: Unbelievable. Cut funding.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: Exactly.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: I do not take the words of the member for Kawana seriously because nobody in law does. I want to move onto the bill.

In contributing to this bill, I recognise the two key separate but complementary targets of this bill, and that is recognising the importance of early intervention and trying to steer young Queenslanders away from a pathway of crime. It also recognises correctly that, despite the best efforts and best intentions of families, the education system and the justice system, there are a small number of young offenders who form a cohort who disproportionately commit a significant percentage of the crimes committed by young Queenslanders.

We know there are multiple issues going on here. It is not to excuse it; it is to understand it so that we can fix it. There is entrenched poverty, generational trauma, housing issues, disengagement with education, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic and family violence, and mental health issues, just to name a few. The point is that while we are talking about this as a youth justice issue, it is not merely a youth justice issue; it is across portfolios. We are talking about the work that our ministers are doing in housing and in education and re-engaging kids in the education system. It is about training. It is about

health care, whether it be alcohol and drug addictions, mental health, or health care full stop for these young offenders. That is what we are dealing with here. We are getting serious about this across portfolios in a whole-of-government approach, and I am proud to associate myself with those efforts.

It goes to matters beyond what those opposite might describe as youth justice issues. It goes to programs like Skilling Queenslanders for Work, giving people who are otherwise disengaged from the community or workforce the training and skills they need to have the confidence to get the experience and to provide for their families, and to contribute to their community and to our society more broadly. That is a whole-of-government approach. Those opposite made cuts to the community sector when they were in government. They cut Skilling Queenslanders for Work and then took cutting Skilling Queenslanders for Work to two elections in a row, as if that was something to be proud of.

We cannot talk about the next generation of young people going forward, trying to give them a chance in life, without considering those broader things that we as a Labor government provide. I said as early as my first speech that I think when it comes to youth justice we need generational change, so let's make it this one. Those opposite, even in this debate, or in the media, and as we have heard this morning from the far-right members like the member for Kawana, engage in name-calling in this space—

Ms KING: Misogyny, too.

Mr SULLIVAN: Yes. In regards to calling people grubs or crims or whatever it is those opposite want to say, as I said in my first speech, if there is name-calling, what I want to see in 20 years, if I am lucky enough to still be here, or perhaps not, is that we call them taxpayers. Wouldn't it be great that 20 years from now the people we are talking about here have received education and training, gone on to build a career, contributed to their families and contributed to our communities? If we can agree that that is where we want to be in 20 years, let's have a serious conversation about how to get from here to there, rather than just this mindless, 24-hour news cycle, revelling in people's grief as those opposite like to do when it comes to crime, and health for that matter.

That is what early intervention is all about and that is what this bill delivers in recognising recidivist offenders. In respect to the high-repeat offenders, this bill deliberately targets those who do not take the early chances to correct their behaviour, those who give others a bad name and continue to harm our people and our community. This bill shows that a Labor government can do what those opposite cannot, and that is walk and chew gum at the same time. This delivers on our philosophy of supporting victims, reducing crime, turning the lives of offenders themselves around and indeed preventing offending in the first place. Surely we can all agree that we are all better off if we are not talking about youth offenders, if we are not talking about crime, but that we are actually talking about a reduction in that behaviour.

I wish to reflect briefly on one particular element of this bill which I think is really important and reflects our current scenario and that is the approach when it comes to social media. I think it does reflect the culture of young people these days. I am really glad that the bill has specific elements for higher penalties when it comes to the offender publishing material advertising their involvement in or of the offending on social media. It is a contrast to those opposite again when they were in government who thought it was funny or tough to name and shame, as they called it. That actually just encouraged people. When people are trying to post on social media, when they are trying to get infamy, when they are trying to show off to their mates, as sad as that is, by committing crimes, naming and shaming actually encourages that behaviour. It is so antiquated and so self-debilitating to take that approach, as opposed to trying to restrict people recruiting their mates via social media, on showing off to their mates on social media, and on how they are living their lives with their friends, cousins or other perpetrators when they are committing these sorts of crimes. That is what this bill tries to address, and I thank the ministers for that approach.

I do want to reflect that whilst obviously introduced by the Premier, this bill reflects the hard work and collaboration from ministers across portfolios. I thank particularly the Attorney-General, the police minister and the Minister for Youth Justice along with, as I said, other ministers who go to the nth degree when it comes to supporting the broader work that is required in this space and in housing, education, health and so many other areas. This is a serious issue that affects all of our communities. We can either go outside and yell at the breeze or come in here and be mature adults. We can provide legislation that provides for the prevention of crime and early intervention to give people's lives back and put them on the right pathway. It can also recognise the serious offenders who have chosen not to take that second chance in life.

I am really proud to be part of a government that is prepared to take those hard decisions and take a comprehensive approach to what is a very difficult area. There is no silver bullet, but I am really proud to be part of a government that is delivering this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.