




Speech By  
**Jonty Bush**

**MEMBER FOR COOPER**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2023

### **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL**

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (3.22 pm): I was very quick to jump up then, but I am really not quite sure what to say after that speech from the member for Callide. I have spoken to him and we have had some lovely conversations. I really do not know who wrote that speech or where that has come from. The only recommendation I would make to the member for Callide is perhaps to use ChatGPT. Had he used that and programmed some basic words—I appreciate that the member for Callide has not shown himself to be the most progressive member in this House, but it is pretty simple to use—he would have noted and said that since we have come to government we have had a year-on-year decline in crime, both adult and youth offending. That is a fact, an objective fact, and it may not fit with his narrative—

**Mrs Gerber** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Lui): Member for Currumbin, order!

**Ms BUSH:** It does not suit the narrative. It is an objective fact. It is an objective fact, released by the ABS within the last month; it is trending down. It comes after what we know are more victims coming forward than ever before to report crime. Yet, in the face of that, we are still seeing a year-on-year decline. What the member for Callide would have noted is record investment in frontline police—far more than when his government was in power. There has been an investment of \$1.6 billion in early intervention by this government as opposed to the interventions that were put in place when the LNP were in government for that brief period. I was there. Many of us were there and were alive to what was going on in that space where drug diversion courts were closed and special circumstances courts were closed. I was a member of Queensland's inaugural Sentencing Advisory Council. We found out that our council was closed through the *Courier-Mail*. We learned through the *Courier-Mail*, not through the then attorney-general, the member for Kawana, that we had been disposed of. That is how we were informed that those services were no longer available. To come in here and to run that narrative is extremely ill-informed.

I rise to make a contribution to the debate, and it is an important debate to have because the right to be safe and the very real need to feel safe is perhaps one of the strongest personal needs that we have as humans. It is an area that I have worked in for most of my adult life, and one that I will continue to focus on in my time here in parliament.

My electorate of Cooper is statistically actually one of the safest areas of Queensland. Despite being an inner-city area, we do experience a proportionately small amount of crime, and we all feel very privileged to be in that position. While I would love to be credited with that, the drivers behind those statistics are really multidimensional. Our community benefits from many of the features that are associated with low-crime areas. We have really low unemployment. We have residents who can afford security systems. We have families who take a really strong and active interest in their children's lives. We have schools that do everything they possibly can to keep young people engaged in school. We

have two Neighbourhood Watch groups who are brilliant at educating residents about crime trends and what they can do to protect their homes and assets that little bit further. It all makes a huge difference. When crime does occur, we do have a local and really proactive police response who are exceptionally quick to respond and to apprehend.

That said, crime, both property and personal, does happen in our community, as it does everywhere in every jurisdiction globally. I frequently hold meetings with victims of crime, Coffee with a Cop events and online team meetings with police and with local residents. We talk about that and we talk about the impact of crime. I know that hearing statements like Queensland does have a year-on-year decline in crime, including youth crime, and hearing about strong police responses does not really help you very much when you in fact have been impacted by crime, and I appreciate that. When you are impacted by crime as a victim, the needs you have are often the things that do not make the media. While I would never presume to speak on behalf of all victims of crime, I feel really confident in outlining what we know are the consistent and common themes and needs for victims following an act of violence which include to be treated with dignity and respect, to be heard, to be included throughout the investigation and throughout the prosecution, and to be informed about the investigation and what is occurring. Victims have the need for agency. They have the need for voice and autonomy throughout the investigation, the trial, the sentencing and the period of parole.

Of course, we want to have our sense of safety restored which might include practical measures like additional measures to improve home security or psychological or therapeutic responses. That is why I am really pleased to see firstly the initial injection of additional funding of \$9 million announced by the Premier to respond better to victims of property crime where violence or a threat of violence has occurred, including \$3 million to boost counselling capacity and to better support our not-for-profits who are delivering those services. That funding will be delivered through the Queensland government's Victim Assist Queensland unit which is a dedicated state government unit that provides support to victims of crime following an act of violence, including financial assistance, to help them recover from that act of violence.

I am also pleased that our government has stated we are going to look in more detail at the experience of crime victims including whether the current responses are appropriately meeting the needs of victims. We know we can always review and adjust the settings when it comes to delivering support for our most vulnerable people in the community. I understand that that inquiry is coming and it may be coming to our committee. I really do look forward to hearing directly from victims of crime and agencies working with victims on that really important issue.

This response to examine the needs of victims and to engage victims in a discussion that has the potential to change policy and legislation in a really positive way is actually what good governments do. I am certainly proud to be on this side of the House and to be on our side of the debate on this. Ultimately, there is one sentiment that all victims of crime unanimously share. That is that no-one else has to experience what they have experienced. For victims to be able to contribute to an inquiry and to use their experiences to inform future reform is something I know they will absolutely care about. It is something that I very much look forward to.