




Speech By  
**Julianne Gilbert**

**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

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**STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL**

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (6.13 pm): The Strengthening Community Safety Bill is a great bill, and the majority of the youth in Queensland are great young people. They are finding their way in life; they are growing into productive adults and enjoying what life throws their way. They are the future of our state. Unfortunately, there are a small number of youths who are prolific reoffenders, putting people and property at harm. The frequency and severity of this offending has worn the community down and we are collectively saying 'no more'. People want to be safe and to feel safe; they want their property to be protected. There is no room for serious violent offending in our community. Safety in the community is paramount. We do not want any more victims of crime.

The Palaszczuk government has implemented successful programs for at-risk youth, to help our young people find a positive path and to make good choices about their education, health and place in society. It is not good enough to just fund a program; the success of it depends on the teams running them having the ability to engage with youth and gain their trust and respect. There are great people such as this working at the Mackay PCYC; Youth Justice; Dee and Rob and their team at YIRS; the team at Kalyan House; and our local police officers. There are many more in the Mackay community looking out for our youth and helping them to get back on track.

I have been to graduations for Project Booyah—a program cut by those opposite—and also for Transition 2 Success. It is uplifting to see young people who were on a path to possible crime standing tall and proud at their graduations. They openly talk about their dreams for the future and, while there are those who have not yet made up their minds about what the future holds for them, there is one thing they are determined about: it will not be a life of crime.

For some youth, these programs have been great at allowing them to repair fractured relationships with their families and caregivers. This is so important to a young person. In the youth co-responder program, which works on our local streets, we see police officers and youth justice officers engaging with our youth who are at risk of offending or at risk of breaching bail. They are intervening before a potential offence has been committed.

When I was a QTU organiser I saw the effect of not having good programs in place to divert youth away from antisocial and criminal behaviours. A lot has been said by those opposite about cutting the programs. When they were in government they changed the way that TAFE funding was to be delivered and how colleges were paid for their outcomes. This had a devastating effect on the Townsville and Cleveland detention centre programs. There were teams of dedicated, experienced teachers who taught TAFE modules in a way which enabled youth to easily transfer straight into a TAFE campus when they were released. This was an effective and positive pathway for them because, through their friends who had been released prior to them, they knew that TAFE was a place where they went to improve their lives. Once the funding changed, these pathways disappeared and those skilled TAFE teachers who had worked at Cleveland could no longer continue. The staff at Cleveland were devastated. Those opposite either did not get it or just did not care. Their reckless decisions have had long-term consequences.

The laws being debated in this bill will strengthen our already strong laws, making breach of bail a criminal offence for the first time this century. The laws will strengthen conditional release orders and declare serious repeat offenders, in some cases, to allow for tougher sentencing principles. This bill is about keeping the community safe. Laws alone will not break the cycle of crime in our young people's lives; it takes a whole community approach.

I want to highlight the work of a young Indigenous man in my community, Justin Gibley. He, with the support of volunteers Blanch Sutherland, her mother Aunty Pat Corrie, and Justin's mum, Donna Leigh, worked without funding for a number of years. They survived on donations. They supported our youth who had been disengaged from education or who had been excluded from all schools, and some had been through the youth justice system. They enrolled them in distance education.

They were dealing with about 15 young people at a time. Justin had some good advice from Don Wilson. They applied for a special education school accreditation. Very experienced retired teachers came on board with the school to get it established. The school is now at capacity, with 62 students. The students are exiting school with positive pathways to apprenticeships, traineeships, Skilling Queenslanders for Work programs and they go on to further education. There have been two students who have achieved a placement at university level. These are 62 young people who would have been on the streets. Young people who were once disengaged from the community are now achieving. Some of these children are the first in their families to finish school and the first to go to work in many generations. The people working at this school are the heroes in my community breaking the cycle. Kutta Mulla Gorinna school is kicking goals. I support the bill.