




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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**VICTIMS OF CRIME ASSISTANCE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (12.41 pm): Every crime is one too many. Unfortunately, we have people in our communities who do not respect those around them and they commit violent crimes of both assault and robbery. As a society we must look after the victims of crime and help them to put their lives back together. Violent crimes can cause physical injury as well as psychological harm.

After a crime, some of the effects on a person not always so evident to the public can be that victims experience serious psychological distress including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Some victims also report experiencing poor sleep, nightmares, lack of focus and continuous replaying of the incident. When a violent crime is committed, we see the community in general portray a sense that their baseline of safety is disrupted, making it more difficult for families and communities to sustain a sense of stability and safety.

The policy objectives of this bill are to increase the maximum amounts of financial assistance payable to victims of acts of violence. The Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009 provides financial assistance to certain victims of acts of violence. The VoCAA establishes a financial assistance scheme.

To protect potential future victims, we need to reduce the pathway to a possible life of crime for our young people. When the member for Nanango made her contribution, she spoke at length about youth crime. In Mackay, programs addressing the complexities of the issues of crime include youth co-responder teams where police and youth justice staff patrol the streets and engage with young people at parks and shopping centres. They do this at night and with great success. They engage with those young people who are at risk.

Under the Transition 2 Success program we have seen many graduations and heard wonderful stories of young people who were not making the best choices. This program aims to prevent at-risk young people entering the youth justice system and to reduce reoffending among those already involved in the system. Programs like this are making sure we keep the youth crime rate in Mackay one of the lowest in the state. We have justice conferencing, which brings victims and young people together, plus elders and other relevant parties, to hold young people to account and help repair harm caused by offending. This is having great results. We have bail support, which helps young people meet their bail conditions.

We also have the services of Bravehearts. They provide specialist counselling services to young people who have been referred to restorative justice conferencing for offences of a sexual nature. We also have case management, which is undertaken with young people who are subjected to youth justice orders. They have wraparound services for our young people and they are making a difference. I would also like to put on record my thanks to all of our sporting clubs, the PCYC, Girl Guides, Scouts, Rangers, Rovers and all the groups in our community that are supporting our young people to make good choices.

I want to touch on an issue that comes up quite often in our communities with young people when it comes to drug and alcohol use. Adults who model responsible drinking behaviour and maintain an open and communicative relationship with their children can positively influence their attitudes towards alcohol. Conversely, adults who engage in irresponsible drinking or exhibit a lack of control can contribute to the normalisation of this behaviour.

Adults within a young person's social circle, including family and friends and older siblings, can impact their attitudes towards alcohol. Peer pressure and the desire to fit in may lead to experimentation with alcohol. We should never be putting children in situations where people are putting peer pressure on our young people. Adults, including parents, teachers and community leaders, all play a crucial role in providing education about the risks and consequences of under-age drinking. Informative programs can help shape responsible attitudes.

Alcohol can have a detrimental effect on the developing brain and body of young individuals. Early and frequent alcohol consumption may interfere with cognitive development and increase the risk of health issues. Under-age drinking is associated with a higher risk of mental health issues, including depression and anxiety. Alcohol can exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions or contribute to the development of new ones. Regular alcohol consumption during adolescence can lead to poor academic performance and lower educational attainment. This, in turn, may have long-term effects on career opportunities and success and can lead to a life of crime. Under-age drinking is illegal. We must make sure that we assist our young people to make the right choices.

I have had contact from a lot of people in the Whitsunday electorate. I would like to thank those sporting codes that are trying to stamp out the drinking culture that has been associated with some sporting codes. They are working really hard to make that distinction. I have fielded complaints from some citizens from Whitsunday complaining about an under-14 breakup, where children allegedly were drinking alcohol—UDLs, Canadian Clubs et cetera. Secondly, they were angry that the member for Whitsunday, the shadow minister for child safety, referred to the incident as an error of judgement at a meeting. They were expecting that she would call out this behaviour for what it is, stand up for the children to make sure they do not have socialisation where they may, in turn, turn to a life of crime and early addiction. Having 12-, 13- and 14-year-olds allegedly drinking liquor is not acceptable, so she should stand up and say, 'This is not acceptable.' Some of the people who contacted me were concerned because they believe that some of the—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I ask that the member return to the long title of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): Member for Mackay, there has been a degree of latitude given to all speakers, but you are way off the long title of the bill. I invite to you return, please.

Mrs GILBERT: Okay. Sorry for that, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was just following up on what the member for Nanango said. She was talking about youth crime and how we can stop young people from getting into a life of crime through alcohol—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I note that the member on her feet is challenging the Speaker's ruling, and I ask that you rule in that regard.

An honourable member interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is outrageous; I take that interjection.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member is not challenging my ruling. I accept the member is giving an explanation of her view on relevance—

Ms BOYD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have not finished speaking, member for Pine Rivers. The member has been asked to return to being relevant, and I will invite her to do so before she resumes speaking. Member for Pine Rivers, what is your point of order?

Ms BOYD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order in relation to the behaviour of the member for Nanango. She is currently on a warning, as I understand it, and has just been arguing across the chamber with other members—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Pine Rivers, that is not a point of order. I am in charge of order in this House and I will dispense rulings as I see fit. The member for Nanango may be on a warning, but she has not done anything wrong in rising to a point of order. Member for Mackay, you have the call.

Mrs GILBERT: The victims of crime assistance bill is a very important bill, so I would call on the member for Whitsunday to stand up for the children in her electorate. If she does not, I call on the opposition leader to sack her from her position because she is putting children at risk by not standing up for the children in her electorate and calling out behaviour which is unacceptable when it involves such young children—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Mackay, I have given you—

Mrs GILBERT: I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I gave you guidance on relevance. You were straying at the time. You have concluded your contribution. I call the member for Bonney.