




Speech By  
**Hon. Leanne Linard**

**MEMBER FOR NUDGE**

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Record of Proceedings, 14 March 2023

**STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL**

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (12.45 pm): Plenty of slogans but no real solutions from those opposite. All politics, no plan, no policies; always just politics—

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Nanango, return to your seat, thank you.

**Ms LINARD:** I rise to speak in support of the Strengthening Community Safety Bill. I want to thank the Economics and Governance Committee for its examination of this bill and recommendations that it be passed. I also thank the 87 members of the public and key stakeholders who made submissions, and all witnesses who presented to the committee at its public hearings across the state. Submitters and witnesses shared views across the spectrum, demonstrating once again the complex nature of youth offending and the divergent views from the community on this matter.

From the outset, as I always do, I want to acknowledge the impact youth offending has on its victims. Whether the impacts are financial, physical, psychological or even result in the tragic loss of life of loved ones, these impacts can be significant and lifelong. That is why we are bringing forward the measures in this bill, to protect the community and tackle the behaviour of the small cohort of serious repeat offenders.

Overall, we know that the number of young people offending is decreasing; it is the lowest it has been for a decade. In fact, we have seen a 37 per cent reduction in the number of 10- to 16-year-old offenders over the past 10 years. While this is encouraging, it is of little comfort to Queenslanders personally affected by youth crime. This reduction in the number of young people offending affirms our approach to youth justice under the Working Together Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy. It demonstrates that the government's significant investment of \$1.2 billion in services and programs delivered across government to prevent and address offending and reoffending is having an impact.

We have also seen an increase in the number of serious repeat offenders. These offenders represent 17 per cent of distinct young people with a proven offence, which has increased. It is this cohort that is committing a large number of offences, and these offences can be serious and sometimes violent. Community safety is paramount and must be any government's first consideration. We have listened to the community and are taking tougher, targeted action at the serious repeat offenders to hold them accountable for their offending behaviour.

The bill includes a suite of new measures to break the cycle of offending by serious repeat offenders and increase community safety. These measures include amending the Criminal Code to increase the maximum sentence for unlawful use of motor vehicle offences and introducing new circumstances of aggravation.

The bill also includes measures to strengthen the youth justice bail framework, including: making breaching a condition of bail a criminal offence; extending and expanding the electronic monitoring trial; clarifying that the police are not required to consider alternatives to arrest if a child on bail for a prescribed indictable offence or certain domestic violence offences has contravened a bail condition; and expanding the offences to which the current presumption against bail provisions apply.

In relation to strengthening the current youth justice sentencing framework, the bill includes provisions which: require the courts to take into account a young person's previous bail history when sentencing; empower a court to declare a child offender a serious repeat offender to enable considerations such as community safety to be paramount when sentencing; enable conditional release orders to operate for six months instead of the current three; and ensure certain child offenders are more likely to serve their suspended term of detention if they breach their conditional release orders.

The bill also ensures the continuation of multiagency collaborative panels which provide intensive case management for young people identified as high risk or requiring a collaborative response. Multiagency collaborative panels currently function in 18 locations with a specific emphasis on addressing the needs of serious repeat young offenders. These panels coordinate access for young people to services such as mental health, drug and alcohol programs, reconnecting with school and school engagement support, cultural connections, and connecting with doctors and allied health providers. They have proven effective in keeping the community safe by disrupting offending behaviour and coordinating cross-agency wraparound services.

We know that legislation alone will not solve the issues we are facing with serious repeat offenders. Youth crime is complex and requires a multifaceted approach, early intervention and the delivery of support to young people and their families. Interventions that are proven to reduce contact with the youth justice system and reoffending rates and provide opportunities for young people to turn their lives around are vital. That is why, alongside these legislative reforms, the government is investing an additional \$100 million in existing and new diversion and rehabilitation services. These programs and services are evidence based and we know they achieve results. The highly effective joint Queensland Police Service and youth justice co-responder teams are being expanded to Mount Isa, Hervey Bay, Darling Downs, South Brisbane and Ipswich. This initiative has already completed 45,000 engagements with young people, including checking they are complying with bail and ensuring they are accessing the right services.

Our government is investing an additional \$18 million to expand intensive case management. This service targets serious repeat offenders aged 13 to 17 and their families. The service aims to reduce the frequency and severity of offending by working with families to address risks such as substance abuse and disengagement from education. Case managers work intensively with a small number of serious repeat offenders who undertake cognitive behavioural therapy sessions each week and family sessions and youth work which is ongoing for about nine months.

The program provides individual sessions for young people to both help them understand and develop skills to change their behaviour and assist family and parents to develop stronger parenting skills and interventions. The intensive case management program is seeing real results with a 51 per cent reduction in offending frequency and a 72 per cent reduction in the severity of offending. The program is currently funded to work with 134 young people. It will be expanded to an additional 180 young people and families across Queensland.

We are investing \$25 million in intensive bail support for young people and families. These services provide support to high-risk young people on bail and their families, practical assistance to ensure young people comply with bail to improve stability and safety at the home so that they are not getting involved in reoffending. The initiative is currently available in Brisbane North, Caboolture, Redcliffe, Gold Coast, Logan and Townsville and will be expanded to Toowoomba and other locations. We are investing a further \$4.1 million in On Country programs to provide cultural rehabilitation services for First Nations young people including supervision by on-country elders.

We are also continuing to invest in early intervention community-based initiatives targeting at-risk young people. We will invest in Townsville's Street University to provide—

**Mr Harper:** Hear, hear!

**Ms LINARD:** I acknowledge the member's interjection. He was a very strong advocate for this. It will provide a safe space for young people aged 12 to 25 years to engage—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart):** Pause the clock. Member for Thuringowa, I remind you that you are on a warning.

**Ms LINARD:** We will work with 12- to 25-year-olds to engage in vocational and education workshops, drug and alcohol treatment services, life skills training and mentoring with pathways to employment because we know the community wants to see young people involved in education and employment; it is the most powerful way to stop offending and reoffending and keep the community safe.

The government also recognises the need to plan for future detention centre infrastructure, and we have committed to building two new centres in Queensland. My department is committed to strengthening our research and evaluation approach to build evidence that can directly inform decision-making, contribute to effective policy and practice, and understand how our youth justice strategy and action plans are achieving intended outcomes. The department regularly undertakes reviews to identify what is working, who it is working for and when we need to evolve our program evaluations.

Our government's top priority is community safety. All Queenslanders have the right to feel safe and that is what this bill is about. Our investment in evidence-based programs and services will help to stop young offenders from becoming repeat offenders and keep the community safe.

I again acknowledge the voices of victims in bringing about these reforms and the ongoing expertise and partnership of organisations such as PeakCare Queensland, Youth Advocacy Centre, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak and the Australian Workers' Union and Together Queensland, who represent the front line in my agency in delivering the evidence-based initiatives of frontline programs I have spoken about today.

I would like to finish by acknowledging all who work so tirelessly in my department in this important policy and service delivery space and thank them for their service to community safety and breaking the cycle of offending. I commend the bill to the House.