




Speech By  
**Linus Power**

**MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

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### **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL**

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (3.02 pm): Recently I spoke to a woman from my electorate in Regents Park who, over a year later, still clearly feels the trauma of her house being forcibly entered while she slept. A young person armed with a knife took her means of transport and connection—her car. Shockingly, the same person tried to return the next night to do the same thing to her neighbour, but a struggle ensued until the police arrived. Recent events meant that she had to relive that trauma. I know that everyone on this side of the House wants to protect her and work towards ensuring that we never see another one of our residents experience that trauma ever again.

We know that strong, stable families who provide love and direction can intervene in the early stages to help reduce the number of crimes committed by young people in the first place. Young people who make errors can recognise those errors and go on to become adults who never interact with crime and/or police again. We also know there should be consequences for those who persist in criminal acts. That is why, after listening to victims and experts, we focused on the serious repeat offenders who do so much repeated damage in our community.

The Economics and Governance Committee is lucky to have not one but two former police officers on our committee. The committee has previously looked at a number of police and justice bills. I want to recognise the member for Macalister for her help and insight on these complex issues.

**Mr Krause:** And the member for Ninderry!

**Mr POWER:** Do you reckon Dan did a good job too? Yes, I recognise the member for Ninderry, who also provided his insights as a police officer. The bill was referred to the Economics and Governance Committee. We received over 87 submissions and held hearings in Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville. We also had witnesses online from Toowoomba, Ayr and Mareeba, and we were open to hearing from witnesses throughout the state. For some considerable time members on this side have been discussing and working on the new issues we are seeing with youth crime, especially with regard to the repeated trauma, damage and loss caused by a number of serious repeat offenders.

This bill strengthens our youth justice laws and aims to keep our communities safer, but these changes should not be seen in isolation. Submitters recognised the need for wider measures outside of the legislation. Witnesses before the committee in Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville were asked if this was a good first step. That is an excellent question. It is really worthwhile recognising that, in response to listening to Queenslanders, both through the committee process and before, important other steps are also being taken simultaneously. Those other steps include: more than \$100 million in extra investment in diversion and rehabilitation; expanding the positive results of intensive case management; youth co-responder teams; expanding the Stronger Communities initiative; On Country programs with elders; and investment in grassroots early intervention.

I recognise that some of the submitters felt these steps would play a bigger role in reducing youth crime. I agree they do have an important role, but I also think it is important that there are consequences for serious breaches of the standards we set in our community where others have been hurt or suffered

fear and loss. That is why this bill has community safety as its primary goal when sentencing repeat youth offenders. It recognises that the conditions set for bail must be respected. Often those very conditions are aimed at ensuring that young people do not associate with those who have encouraged them to commit criminal acts. They must be respected. While police may consider alternatives, offenders can now also be charged with breach of bail. We recognise that, because of additional vehicle security, the nature of vehicle theft is changing. There are more incidents of violence and threats to gain access to keys. This bill quite rightly increases penalties for theft of a motor vehicle.

This bill amends the Youth Justice Act to require the court to take into account bail history—both positive bail history where a young person has respected bail conditions and negative history where they have breached bail and not respected the court. This bill transfers 18-year-olds from youth detention to adult custody recognising that, as those in youth detention become adults, it is about the safety of others in detention and workers who are trying to create a stable place for younger people. The bill recognises that we need to tackle the complex nature of inequality and other causes of youth crime, expand intensive case management and youth co-responder teams, and build on the positive work of the early intervention action group in Townsville by bringing together police, youth justice and other representatives to intensively case manage and coordinate services for young people.

The Economics and Governance Committee examined the issue of fundamental legislative principles in the Human Rights Act. We recognise that any issue where a Queenslanders is facing a stronger sentence of detention is a serious issue. The minister recognised this by tabling a document in accordance with the Human Rights Act which recognises that, in order to protect community safety, the act is overwritten and its application is excluded. Make no mistake: this is a serious action to address the serious issue of community safety and it is not taken lightly.

We as a committee recognise it is difficult to balance the rights of those who have been hurt by crime against the measures in this bill. To quote a submitter on this issue, 'Governments have a duty to protect citizens. The rights of victims of crime, particularly their right to life, is a critically important consideration for government, and everyone in Queensland has the right to feel safe in their community.' We should recognise that serious repeat offenders are not just hurting their victims; they often induce and pressure others to engage in dangerous and hurtful acts. Other young people deserve the right to be free from these pressures. The committee agrees and recognises the difficult balance between the competing rights the minister is managing.

From listening to Queenslanders, we know that the Youth Justice Act changes are an important part of reducing the pain of victims that I spoke about in the beginning of this speech. We recognise that this government is separately investing \$9 million in new funding to better assist, including essential funds for counselling support and community support in supporting victims. We are also sensitive to the experiences of those who are victims and we seek the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee to further look at these complex issues.

However, we also know that each community has their own specific challenges—town by town and in some cases even street by street. We are working together to stop crime through tackling its causes and ensuring there are consequences for those who repeatedly and seriously hurt other Queenslanders. Having spoken to locals in Cairns, I know that their challenges are different to those in Logan and require local work. I have spoken to locals in Ayr and Townsville, in Mareeba and Toowoomba, and all are passionate and have their own local additional approaches about addressing the local causes of crime. The Economics and Governance Committee unanimously agrees that the bill be passed. I endorse the bill to the House.