




Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**

**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2023

### **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL**

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities) (12.02 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023. There was widespread consultation, with 87 submissions and public hearings held in Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville. The committee and especially the chair, the member for Logan, should be acknowledged for their contribution. The committee made only one recommendation and that is to pass the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023.

I appreciate that there have been some divergent views on this piece of legislation and not everyone agrees with the government's approach. That is to be expected on a piece of legislation such as this. Considering the submissions and evidence, it is very clear that this bill has struck a well-balanced approach.

The objective of the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023 is to give effect to legislative reforms announced by the Queensland government on 29 December 2022 aimed at keeping the community safe and strengthening youth justice laws to respond to serious repeat offenders. Our community expects that the government put safety front and centre. This was acknowledged clearly by the Premier in the announcement of 29 December 2022 when she stated—

Crime, especially youth crime, is a complex issue but community safety must come first ...

All of the programs to divert children away from crime will continue but the community is demanding tougher penalties too.

This bill is one part of the solution. There is an entire wraparound of other assistance and options available to ensure we break the cycle of youth offending. We are only talking about a very small cohort of the community and for most young people there is not a repeated interaction with the criminal justice system. However, it is the repeat and serious offenders who need to be dealt with for the safety of our community.

I note the SDA's submission from the secretary, Chris Gazenbeek. I also note my membership which is listed in the Register of Member's Interests. The SDA, which represents retail workers, stated in their submission—

The SDAQ has received increasing comments and feedback ... about 'youth gangs' in shopping centre carparks at night. Incidents generally related to issues of intimidation but has now escalated to property damage, vandalism and workers feeling threatened and scared to leave the stores—especially at night.

Workers, no matter their industry or location, deserve to feel safe and secure in their working environment. In a previous life I worked for the Queensland Police Union and I would like to put on record my ongoing thanks and appreciation for the work done day in, day out by our proud and very hardworking men and women in the police. The Queensland Police Union submission states—

From the outset the QPU recognises that youth offending is a whole of government response and needs more than just legislation to address the issues of youth offending. We recognise the need for a robust framework of legislation to inform the function of Police and Courts but also acknowledge the need for wrap around services for offenders and their families, alternative justice models and programs that involve cultural and community leaders.

...

The QPU supports this legislation ...

The Local Government Association of Queensland has been an active proponent in highlighting the diverse needs and concerns of Queensland's regions, shires and cities. Their submission states—

The first priority of any government is to ensure the safety of its citizens.

On behalf of our member councils, the LGAQ strongly welcomes action to address the youth crime issues impact local communities across Queensland.

There is a role for an opposition to try to represent alternative views to government policy, but scaremongering and blatant misrepresentation of facts and issues does the community no favour whatsoever. Last week the LNP launched a scurrilous attack on the hardworking members of the Ferny Grove Police Station saying there have been cuts to the station's numbers. I want to put on record that there have been no cuts to the Queensland Police Service. The cuts to the commissioned officer ranks in this state were made by those opposite when they were in government. I want to put on record clearly that there have been no cuts under this government. In fact, I am advised the number of approved police positions at Ferny Grove remains unchanged at 49 officers. I am advised that from 1 March 2015 to 31 January 2023 the approved police strength in Queensland increased by 1,018 positions, from 11,430 to 12,448.

This bill will deliver on community expectations and help keep Queenslanders safe. There are programs in place to try to stop youth offending. When there are incidents of interactions with the criminal justice system, the right penalties can be found in this bill. I want to commend the work of my colleague the Minister for Police. I applaud his efforts on this bill. I commend the bill to the House.