




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2023

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (12.24 pm): I rise to speak on the Strengthening Community Safety Bill. To echo the words of the member for Macalister, we are here speaking to a bill such as this because something has gone wrong with a small number of our young people.

I am the daughter of a retired police officer, so the principle of consequence for action is not lost on me. Our communities rightfully deserve to feel safe. I am also lucky—lucky to have grown up in a family free of violence, filled with love and the supports that both my brother and I needed. The unfortunate truth is that young people who have a childhood exposed to trauma, addiction, crime and neglect are significantly more likely to come in contact with the criminal justice system. That does not excuse their behaviour, but it does provide context to a problem that is more complex than the three-word slogans we have continually heard from those opposite.

I find some of the comments made about gold standard early intervention particularly disingenuous when we know the track record of those opposite. They slashed \$10 million from the youth justice budget, cut 224 child safety staff, cut the Murri Court, cut the Drug Court and cut Skilling Queenslanders for Work. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition, who was a cabinet minister at the time, has the nerve now to say that they want programs reviewed to ensure money is being spent effectively when his government spent \$16.7 million on a program, delivered by an LNP donor, that was the subject of a scathing Auditor-General report. They also cut youth justice conferencing without consultation—a program that had a 98 per cent satisfaction rate and provided an important diversionary option. In fact, the member for Kawana, who was at the time the attorney-general, said, 'The Labor Party set up all these programs and they did not work,' which I found interesting since the program was actually set up by the then LNP Borbidge government in 1996.

Our government reintroduced restorative justice conferencing, which has seen a significant number of participants go on to not reoffend, and it is this government that continues to invest in the early intervention programs that we know work, programs like Transition 2 Success, which we have on the Gold Coast—a vocational training and therapeutic service that has seen more than 480 young people graduate. Sixty-seven per cent of participants did not offend or reoffend within 12 months.

We also have intensive case management targeting chronic young offenders aged 13 to 17 to help them and their families break the cycle of crime. It also addresses multiple factors that impact chronic juvenile offending, including substance abuse, and aims to enhance family and kinship connections and promote engagement in education and training. We also have multiagency collaborative panels, where government and non-government organisations are working together to coordinate service delivery and address systemic barriers that contribute to high-risk young people's offending.

We have youth co-responder teams, with dedicated police and youth justice workers who patrol the streets and engage with young people at risk of offending and young people on bail. We have community youth response and diversion programs and services with after-hours support, Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander cultural mentoring, bridging to education programs, and intensive case management. We also have intensive bail supports for young people and families. We have On Country programs, working with First Nations communities to make sure that is delivered in a culturally appropriate way. We have Project Booyah, which I know has assisted so many young people in my community. I have had the privilege of going to a number of graduation ceremonies—ceremonies, I should note, that I have never seen the Liberal National Party attend. Those programs have a real and meaningful impact in the lives of young people.

These programs across the board have seen a 37 per cent reduction in the number of offenders aged between 10 and 16 since 2017. We know the statistics show us that the overwhelming majority of young people who come into contact with the youth justice system do not go on to reoffend because our early intervention programs are working, but I acknowledge, we all acknowledge, that those statistics mean little to anyone who is the victim of crime. I want to put my thoughts on the record to anyone who is the victim of crime. I acknowledge the comments that have been made by a number of people in this House around how we can improve on those systems to make sure that the voices of those victims of crime are heard throughout the process.

We are also committed to giving our frontline services the resources they need, which is why we committed to 2,025 additional police personnel by 2025. Let us be clear: for all of the LNP's tough-on-crime rhetoric, there would be 1,000 fewer police officers across Queensland if they were elected in the 2020 election.

Youth justice is a complex area with no simple solution. There are many contributing factors behind what leads a young person to make a wrong and sometimes devastating decision, and the pain of victims is real. We all acknowledge that and that is why we are here today. These issues are hard, but our youth justice strategy aims to tackle them head-on in breaking the cycle of offending, for our communities but, more importantly, for the next generation of young Queenslanders.