




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.20 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Strengthening Community Safety Bill. We are here speaking to a bill such as this because something has gone wrong with a small number of our young people. Something has gone terribly wrong. We could have a philosophical debate on the history of juvenile offending. Juveniles have been committing offences for centuries. Here in Australia our foundations were built on the transportation of criminals. Of the 160,000-odd convicts that were transported here, 25,000 of them were juveniles; in fact, some of them under the age of 10. But before I start sounding like the member for Clayfield, I would like to talk about modern Australia. Today we are dealing with some thoroughly modern problems with a mix of colonial hangovers.

Every child that commits a crime against another community member is an indictment not only on the individual concerned but also the parents and the extended family, and it says much about the failures of a community because it does take a village to raise a child. It takes all of us. Where does it go wrong? When does a child become so removed from a collective humanity as to not care about the damage they cause, the hurt and fear that they spread or the lives that they take? More chillingly, at what point do they choose to seek out such damage, fear and mayhem? Where is the value of life and respect for others? I hear this a lot from community members and from those opposite. Perhaps another rhetorical question is: if someone does not respect themselves, how do you expect them to respect others? I do not seek to find excuses. I do not seek to point blame; there is enough finger-pointing going on in this debate.

We know that young people who have a childhood exposed to trauma, addiction, crime and parental neglect are much more likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system. This is not in dispute. It is a life that starts with the worst possible beginnings, and the pathway from there is as tragic as it is almost inevitable. How do we treat these most vulnerable members of the community, the ones most likely to find sanctuary outside the family unit, the ones often to be found wandering the streets somewhat aimlessly, the ones referred to in the opposition's statement of reservation as 'the youth at risk before offending becomes prolific'? I know them because they are in number disproportionately from my community. Do we embrace them? Do we as a government or even as a community seek to bring them in and show them and take on the support of which they have been deprived? Or do we reject them, scorn them and tell them that they are not welcome and that they should go somewhere else? That is what my community hears particularly from those members of the Gold Coast opposite: 'We don't want your Logan kids down here. We don't want them catching the train down to the Gold Coast. Go back to where you came from.' That is the village that we are raising such children in these days.

'We believe in establishing gold standard early intervention programs,' the opposition statement of reservation implores, and then goes on to highlight this bill's failure to outline services offered by the government in the prevention space. It is such a shame then that when they were in government they

funded three-fifths of stuff all when it came to youth justice diversionary measures. Project Booyah was not good enough for them. I would point those members to the broader strategic goals of tackling youth justice.

There are four pillars, the first of which is intervening earlier. This bill is not a silver bullet; it does not pretend to be. It merely represents the last of the four pillars of our youth justice strategy which is about reducing the reoffending. There are a range of measures in between which many members on this side have already spoken about before me. In fact, the committee report notes that the amendments to legislation of this bill are not in isolation and form part of a larger youth justice reform, such as youth and family wellbeing services, community youth response and diversion, restorative justice conferencing and youth co-responder teams.

I would like to briefly discuss one of the clauses in this bill because it gives us an insight into why we are experiencing a rise in unlawful use of motor vehicle offences, particularly for juveniles. Clause 8 makes amendments to the unlawful use of a motor vehicle in the Criminal Code, specifically to section 408A(1B) which outlines the circumstance of aggravation for when an offender publishes material to a social media platform. This is a phenomena that was not around when I was policing property crime, and in many cases it is not ancillary to the offence but is the core driver of offending behaviour; that is the stealing of cars is no longer just for the joyride or to get from point A to point B, but for playing to an audience. The desire to be a social media star is what young people are prepared to do and risk for notoriety. It is a challenge for all governments at all levels, of all persuasions. Yes, this specific clause does evoke a 12-year imprisonment offence which thankfully our magistrates and judges are competent enough to be able to read in conjunction with the Youth Justice Act, even if the member for Burdekin cannot. This bill is not the be-all and end-all for youth justice reforms in Queensland. It is one end of a spectrum of measures.

We on this side of the House want to see a safe and prosperous Queensland for all Queenslanders where young people on the wrong path can be diverted where possible and engaged in their community, not ostracised, not humiliated and not shamed. I support our government's youth justice strategy.