




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2023

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (3.19 pm): I stand to make my contribution to the Strengthening Community Safety Bill and I want to state a couple of the things from the outset. As I have said to people in my electorate and other areas, this government is committed to ensuring our communities are kept safe and that serious repeat offenders are held to account. The vast majority of young people who come into contact with the criminal justice system do not reoffend following diversion and rehabilitation programs. This bill specifically targets those offenders whose actions impact community safety. Our approach, and the approach in the bill, is fundamentally about three things. First and foremost, it is about targeting serious repeat youth offenders. It is about tackling the complex causes of youth crime, and they are complex, extensive and take time. It is also about investing in community safety.

On a number of occasions I have had the unfortunate pleasure of having to talk to a number of my constituents who have been the victims of crime, including juvenile crime. That has been happening for a while. There is no joy in sitting down to listen to someone who has gone through this. My family has been exposed to it. I know the hurt and pain that it brings to the community. Anyone who suggests that anybody in this chamber comes to this debate without reflecting on their community and passing those messages onto the Premier, the Deputy Premier, cabinet and fellow parliamentary colleagues is absolutely having themselves on. That is our role and that is what we are seeing here today. The hard work is being laid out by what we are doing today.

I remember one afternoon I was leaving my office when a young man came in. He was infuriated. His car had been stolen. He was a worker and he had thousands of dollars worth of tools in his vehicle. Understandably, he was very upset. He made his case very clear to me. It started off with colourful language and we had a bit of a discussion. After a little while he settled down and we started talking about the details. I said, 'Okay, let's talk about this.' We started to work through what he thought we should be doing. We had those discussions. I explained to him where the government stands and how we get things done.

That young man went away but he came back the next day. He apologised for the way he had conducted himself. He sat down and said, 'I want to make a contribution.' I contacted him not so long ago and told him that, after the discussions we had had some months ago and those I had had with other people, we would be introducing a piece of legislation. I told him that the legislation talks about breach of bail and strengthening conditional release orders. In his case, it was acknowledged that the offender was a repeat offender. This piece of legislation is a direct result of some of the issues that that young man had brought to my attention. I talked about the new declaration of serious repeat offenders and he seemed quite happy with that. We talked about increasing the penalties for stealing vehicles and we went into a little bit of detail on that.

I have spoken to a range of people about the proposals that we are putting through the parliament today. All of those people have been exposed to crime in some way, shape or form. I can tell the House that the majority of them are happy with these proposals including expanding the number of offences with a presumption against bail. There are community expectations in relation to that and this legislation enforces that.

Apart from the fact that we are taking criminal history into account, we are also extending and expanding GPS electronic monitoring and transferring 18-year-olds into adult custody to get older kids away from younger kids. I have been to the three youth detention centres that we have in this state. They are not happy little places. I have seen the individuals who work there and I have seen the juveniles contained there. If people who have not been to those institutions think that they are a walk in the park then they should go and have a look at them. I am very pleased that 18-year-olds will be moved from youth detention into adult custody because the influence they have on younger juveniles is enormously concerning.

I have spoken to a number of people who have had their homes broken into. I note the story of one woman from Manunda with whom I spoke. She was asleep and when she got up her car was gone. Having watched the camera footage, her initial comment to me was, 'What is forcing these young kids to do this?' She was looking at the video footage and saying, 'Look at these young kids. What are they doing? How do they get to this?' As with the majority of people, once they get over the anger, she was more interested in knowing what we are going to do to stop this from happening.

We know the expansion and extension of case management is fundamental. We have that in Cairns. We know that an expansion of the youth co-responder teams is good. I have been out in Cairns with our youth co-responder team and I know it works. I have seen government departments working together towards positive outcomes for the community, which is terrific.

I acknowledge the expansion and extension of early action groups, which are working in Cairns. I have met the people who run the On Country programs and I have met juveniles who have been involved in those programs. Providing culture-based rehabilitation for First Nations young people, including supervision by elders, is absolutely fundamental.

I do not say any of this without taking the victims into account because they are people I talk to, they are people I have promised to represent and they are people I have made commitments to. This government sticks by those commitments, including our commitment to extend the Youth Crime Taskforce. We are putting in high-visibility patrols and we are seeing some positive results. Looking at January 2022 to January this year, we are 52 per cent down. While that may be a good result, we will continue to work for better results. That is part of it.

We are expanding the joint flying squads and additional money will go to that. We are helping seniors to secure their homes with an initial \$15 million initiative. I have a mate in the insurance game who tells me that if you install an immobiliser on your vehicle that will have an impact on your vehicle insurance. In that regard we are investing \$10 million in select areas and I am very lucky that Cairns is one of those areas. Let us see what happens in that space.

We will provide enhanced assistance for victims of crime. That is vitally important. We recognise the trauma associated with crime and \$9 million is being invested to better respond to victims of property crime. This is all happening as a result of the lobbying that goes on and the actions happening in our communities.

I thank the committee, particularly for coming to Cairns. I thank the chair. I encouraged everybody in my community to attend. I sent emails even to those people who do not support me but are anti me. My office contacted them and I encouraged them to appear before the committee. It is vitally important that everybody here hears from the people in Cairns—not just me but a range of others. They did hear that.

In closing, I thank the Premier, cabinet and my parliamentary colleagues. Some of these decisions are tough but we got it through and it worked well. I thank and acknowledge the police. I acknowledge all those who work in the child safety area. It is a tough gig. I am not sure what the circumstances are around COVID but there has been an absolute explosion in need. I am not sure whether there were fewer foster parents around because of COVID. I am not sure what has happened. We are looking into all of those sorts of things. However, I do know that there are people who are working every day to get the best results. I am confident that this is what the community is expecting. We are hoping for better results and I am sure we will get them. I thank each and every one of my colleagues. I remind the people of Queensland that on this side of the House we never surrender reason to passion. We look at the science and we apply it.