




Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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### **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (11.21 am): I rise to make a contribution to the Strengthening Community Safety Bill on behalf of my community, the people of Mudgeeraba, because they are very concerned about safety, and particularly about the security of their neighbourhoods, which is at a perilous point due to the lack of action and soft-on-crime approach of those opposite. Oh yes, they talk a good game—tough on crime they say; we will fix this with legislation they cry in the media. Instead, what do we see? We see the same tired, trite, third-term marketing phrases they toss around without any real commitment to making our community safer or addressing the root causes of the issues driving young people into a life of crime.

Now that she has finally turned up for work, we can see the Premier's plan. It is not what she told Queenslanders. Time and time again she ridiculed the opposition's plan for breach of bail as an offence. Then at the 11th hour there is a backflip. Perhaps the Premier is getting in some gymnastic training ahead of the Olympics. Consistently we heard those opposite decrying the LNP's breach of bail policy. They blocked the LNP from moving an amendment to introduce breach of bail as an offence and now we see the government's proposal—an identical copy of the previous amendment. Do not worry, we are used to the government handing in our homework.

This week, in an extraordinary development, we have seen the Palaszczuk Labor government's youth crime laws crumble on the floor of this parliament. Labor have finally revealed the bombshell that the Palaszczuk government cannot deliver their laws as promised to Queenslanders. The Palaszczuk Labor government deliberately did not tell Queenslanders their 10-point plan will not override basic sentencing provisions in the Youth Justice Act, severely watering down Labor's tough laws.

In December 2022, the Premier specifically promised Queenslanders her new laws would mean that violent juvenile car thieves will face 14 years jail in a suite of increased penalties aimed squarely at keeping the community safe. Now, during debate the Premier and ministers are backtracking after it was revealed and confirmed Labor's new laws cannot override section 175 of the Youth Justice Act. Section 175 of that act states: one, under a magistrate juvenile criminals can only be imprisoned to a maximum of one year; two, under a District Court judge juvenile criminals can only be imprisoned for a maximum of five years; and, three, in serious cases, juveniles can only be sentenced to half of the maximum sentence applied to adults.

This means the promise that Premier Palaszczuk made in black and white to Queenslanders is not true. Sadly, we have heard it all before. This is yet another plan, with 10 points, in addition to the plans announced in 2015, 2016, 2019 and 2021—that is, 26 points in total—and the 47-point youth justice strategy of 2019 to 2023. Queenslanders cannot have faith in Labor solving youth crime. They have had seven years to do it and it is as bad as it has ever been.

The community has had enough. They tell me that under Labor, thugs who commit crime are let off and the police cannot do anything about it. They want proper programs for young offenders so they learn discipline and control. They want these kids to improve so they have a chance to get off the wrong track. The LNP will introduce gold standard intervention programs and make sure they are audited so the public can be confident there are outcomes for the money that is invested.

So much for their transparent and accountable processes, especially around the introduction of this bill. We know stakeholders were not properly consulted and then had a reduced time frame to make considered, sensible submissions to the committee considering this legislation. Seventeen days is all the government gave the committee to report on the bill. Queenslanders had just three days to make written submissions. What is Labor scared of? Is it that Queenslanders will expose their false promises—like the Premier's tough talk on crime; not the 10 years she promised for car theft as the bill recommends seven.

Perhaps the Premier would like to talk to Belinda a volunteer who works in one of my community sporting clubs. Belinda needs her car to run her family around, get to work and ferry young players to weekend sporting fixtures. Belinda watched as a group of young thugs stole her car, trashed it and were let off by a hamstrung judiciary. They were still in the car when they were arrested and then charged with their 20th criminal offence. Then they were released back into the very community they still terrorise.

Like every victim of crime, Belinda continues to suffer. She is spending hours fighting insurers, seeking to replace the car used to support her community. Our community has rights: the right to expect that when criminals are caught there is a consequence. But no, again we see the part-time Premier backtracking so the young girls like the one who stole Belinda's car are free to do it again. Serious repeat offenders under Labor have almost doubled. They know they will get off so off they go again.

It is not only the community Labor is failing; they are not helping these young people get back on track. They are spending the money but the projects are not delivering. They are letting these young people slip through the cracks because nobody is monitoring what works and what clearly does not.

Some \$1 billion has been spent on intervention and what have we got to show for it? We have a youth crime epidemic and now our communities are paying twice. They know the men and women in blue are doing their best. They also know that the thin blue line is getting thinner all the time, with police resources stretched to the limit because of inadequate funding and poor administration on behalf of the Labor government.

People are taking matters into their own hands and forking out their own hard-earned cash to keep themselves safe. To fit a house with Crimsafe screens and hardwired cameras can cost around \$25,000. That is what hardworking Queenslanders are being forced to do. Retailers are cashing in. Catalogues have more home security products than televisions these days.

Some are even borrowing the money. Some are already digging into their superannuation because they just do not feel safe without personal security for their homes. Instead of building a nest egg for retirement they are so scared they want to build their homes into fortresses. Already they are faced with skyrocketing insurance premiums and we know those costs are forced up with increasing crime rates.

Man-made disasters like crime waves have just as big an impact on the cost of insurance for Queensland household as do natural disasters. Just ask the people who live in some suburbs. When they ring their insurers the first question is: where do you live? If it is a certain postcode up goes the premium.

Sadly, we know many of the worst affected suburbs are actually in Labor electorates. I am surprised that community members have not been beating down the doors of their local MPs asking them to do something—anything. They are already staring down the barrel of a housing crisis because of Labor's failings. Now they have a crime crisis that is spiralling into a cost-of-living crisis. They are desperately installing cameras and screens to help bring down insurance premiums. Whatever they do, they are out of pocket. They are paying for Labor's failings over and over again.

Those Labor failings have prompted the introduction of amendments by my colleague, the member for Burdekin. As a former police officer, he knows the difficulties of fighting crime. Removing detention as a last resort as a sentencing principle from the Youth Justice Act 1992 is a considered response to those difficulties. The objectives of those amendments is to ensure serious repeat offenders are given appropriate penalties to reduce further offending and keep the community safe. To achieve that, those amendments would need to be made to both the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to remove references to the sentencing principle and the Youth Justice Act 1992. The LNP amendment would unshackle the judiciary. They must have the ability to provide security for the community and deal with these recidivist criminals.

Yes, it is difficult to strike the balance between the rights of young offenders and their need for rehabilitation, but the community too has rights: the right to feel safe in their homes. It is cause and effect: a crime crisis equals cost-of-living pressures. This government is not keeping Queenslanders safe; it is keeping them broke. It is keeping a frightened community locked in their own homes while young criminals roam free.