




Speech By  
**Hon. Scott Stewart**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 15 March 2023

### **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL**

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (2.15 pm): I rise in support of the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023. This bill is about making sure community safety continues to be paramount and continues to build on this government's reforms. We understand the impact youth crime has on victims and our communities, which is why it is important that we take this tough action. I again reflect that the Premier announced \$9 million of additional funding to Victims Assist, and yesterday the Attorney-General said—

I acknowledge the committee's comments in the report that the Victims of Crime Assistance Act should be reviewed with a view to considering enhancements to the act. As the Premier has announced today, we will be ... referring that to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee.

I will always listen to my community and fight for what they need, and that is why I support this bill. Unlike those opposite, this government does not look at this issue with a singular approach. We know that early intervention is key, and that is why we are investing more than \$100 million in additional funds into programs that are proven to make a difference. This builds on the \$800 million investment the government has already made in response to youth crime and tackling its complex causes to help break the cycle of offending in the future.

This includes programs like Project Booyah, which has seen some great success throughout Townsville and Queensland. Those opposite refuse to even acknowledge that those programs matter. Making sure young people are engaged in education and getting them into work is incredibly important, and this government continues to invest in infrastructure projects in Townsville and North Queensland because we know they support good jobs. Unlike those opposite who we know just cut, sack and sell—and that includes the Queensland Police Service and the Townsville Police Academy—we will continue to invest in programs like the Townsville Street University, which I know the member for Thuringowa has fought exceptionally hard for, but we will not shy away from ensuring our community is kept from that small group of serious recidivist offenders who steal cars and engage in disgraceful behaviour. They must be held to account. Our community expects that, and so do I. I will never apologise for that.

We know that those opposite love to be front and centre at press conferences as they continue to try and politicise this serious issue. I respond directly to our community and my constituents about youth crime, and I work to ensure that Townsville's and my expectations are met when it comes to tackling this complex issue. No amount of crime is acceptable. The government takes community safety seriously, and that is why this bill is before the House. I have always said that we would listen to our community, and that is what we are doing and will continue to do. We will always do what is best for the community, including taking a bipartisan approach to tackling youth crime.

Among the new measures included in this bill are increasing the maximum penalty for stealing cars from seven to 10 years imprisonment as well as requiring the courts to take account of previous bail history, criminal activity and a person's track record when sentencing. This builds on the success of reversing the presumption against bail for youth offenders, which the Queensland Police Service has said is making a difference in the community. We introduced breach of bail as an offence with real

consequences. That is unlike the LNP, who despite their claims never actually legislated a breach of bail offence for young offenders when they were last in government. In fact, what they legislated for was a finding of guilt while on bail. It did not work, it made no sense, and the statistics showed there was more than a 90 per cent recidivism rate for those people charged.

We have listened to the community about introducing a real breach of bail offence that is workable and will hold people who do the wrong thing to account. While we are on the LNP's ineffective policies, we are still waiting for them to 'get it right' when it comes to their crime plan. That is what the opposition spokesperson for police and member for Burdekin said on 8 January 2021. That is 795 days ago, as of yesterday. The only plan they have come up with is three dot points. There is no actual plan, no actual legislation.

This government will never sit idly by and do nothing when it comes to both tackling the causes of youth crime and holding those who do the wrong thing to account. I will always fight for my community and listen to my community and I will continue to do all I can to tackle this serious issue on all fronts.