




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOWOOMBA NORTH

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STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.51 pm): I rise to make my contribution to this debate. I want to start with a few quotes. The first one is from our now Premier, the member for Inala at the time, back in 2009. She quotes a former member of this House, Mike Horan, who said—

... those people who commit such crimes should be held accountable and face punishment that is deserving of the crime they have committed, regardless of the age of the offender.

What the Premier said when quoting him was—

This is where the opposition starts to get into trouble from the word go.

We can only assume that she has a different view: that offenders should not be held to account. In 2016 the former attorney-general said—

I rise tonight to take the final steps in the long process of restoring and strengthening the Queensland youth justice system after it was seriously and shamelessly attacked by the previous government.

At the time there was a lot of discussion about evidence that would lead to outcomes. I want to give members some evidence. In 2012 the number of offences of unlawful entry in Toowoomba was 1,053. A few short years later, in 2015 under the LNP, it had reduced by 30 per cent and was down to 736. In 2022 it rose to 1,821, a 147 per cent increase and two and a half times what it was when the LNP left government. It would appear that the evidence that we were looking for was misguided at best. But it does not stop there. Let us go to unlawful use of a motor vehicle. In 2012 when the LNP came to office the number of offences of unlawful use of a motor vehicle in Toowoomba was 203. We got that down by eight per cent. In 2022 it was 730, up 292 per cent—a nearly four times increase.

The impact of that is great and I will come to that in a minute, but I will bring to the attention of the House the last one which is assault. In 2012 the number of assault offences was 503. It went down to 473, down six per cent, under the LNP. Apparently the reforms that were not working drove all three of these measures down. It is now up to 1,160, up 145 per cent, or two times more. The outcome of that is we are now at 2,300 victims. That is a massive increase in the victims in my community from this dabbling in the so-called evidence-based outcomes of the youth justice system.

The simple facts are that the evidence shows that everything this government has done has led to more victims in my community, more crime, increasing the cost of living and increasing insurance. When I ran pubs I knew a couple of people who used to fix my broken windows. They are now driving some of the nicest cars you have ever seen because they have been making a packet of money fitting security screens and doors all over town, as everybody else who is grappling with the cost of living is having to put Amplimesh and Crimsafe, CCTV and extra lights up just to feel safe.

I want people to think about the 2,300 victims—that is the evidence that now exists in Toowoomba—because of this government's failed youth justice laws and the unwinding of ours. To reiterate: unlawful entry went down 30 per cent under the LNP; unlawful use of a motor vehicle went

down eight per cent under the LNP; and assault went down six per cent under the LNP. That is the hard evidence recorded on the government's own data. Since that time, under the ALP we have seen a 147 per cent increase in unlawful entry; a 292 per cent increase in unlawful use of a motor vehicle and a 145 per cent increase in assault. If that is not evidence that what was introduced by this government and has been dabbled with and played around with by this government has not worked in any way, shape or form then I do not know what other evidence the academics and other people can put forward. Clearly, what the LNP did worked because it drove crime down. Clearly, what Labor has done has not worked because it drove crime up. They are the facts.

Last year in a question on notice to the minister for youth justice I asked about some of the programs that were being introduced, such as restorative justice, youth justice orders and bail for young people who completed conditional bail programs. Just so members know, in 2020 the conditional bail program had a 100 per cent failure rate. In 2021 it had a 100 per cent failure rate. This government likes to come in and lecture everybody about how they will fix everything and the policies they have will make it all better and if we do this and we do that we can help these young people. Who they are not helping are the victims who are prisoners in their own homes. Not only are they prisoners in their own homes, they are spending money on locking themselves in. They are having to put up protective screens, install electronic surveillance and lighting and sleep with items for protection by their bed. They are not sure whether they should leave the keys out so they just get the car stolen and have to pay more in insurance and go through months and months of what it is like not to have the vehicle.

I have one statement from an elderly lady who retired and moved up to Toowoomba. She has asked me if she can get the stamp duty back on her house. She has only been there for a year or so and she does not want to have to pay the stamp duty to sell her house and move out of town. She has had seven attempted burglaries. She has spent thousands of dollars trying to secure her premise and she does not feel safe to the point where she is leaving town. All she is asking is can the government exempt her from the stamp duty on the house because she does not think it is fair she has been driven out of town by criminals. The lack of action from the Labor Party has led to that outcome and she should not have to foot the bill and give the Labor Party additional tax income for leaving her home.

The problem is that Labor has constantly viewed this as a political problem. It is a political problem to them. The reason we now face breach of bail is very simple: they would have done some polling in their marginal seats, probably a couple of seats up in Townsville, and they would have said, 'Holy smokes! The people of Queensland are very concerned about us with this revolving door of justice and the fact that everybody keeps getting let back out and some people have offended and offended and offended and offended.'