




Speech By
Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for the Environment and Tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation) (10.43 pm): I stand today in this chamber excited and proud to be a part of the Crisafulli LNP government, which has fought so hard to take action on Queensland's youth crime crisis. It is a crisis that, if you listen to the member for Cooper, suddenly just materialised. Actually, we all know—Queensland knows—that it occurred because of 10 years of mismanagement by those opposite. I am also grateful to the Queenslanders who trusted our plan and gave us this opportunity to be here tonight to debate and hopefully pass these laws. We know they are needed. The statistics, the courts, the victims, the community and the police tell us they are needed. We promised that, if elected, we would get stuck in and pass these laws before Christmas, so now that is exactly what we are doing.

Youth crime has been rampant in our communities for too long, and these laws and our policies will put an end to the reign of terror that too many brazen young crims have held our state in for too long. Now juvenile offenders who commit serious crimes such as murder, manslaughter and grievous bodily harm will face the same penalties as adults. We are also prioritising victims' rights—something I cannot believe we actually need to do, as it should have been the norm all along. Sentencing courts will now have to give greater regard to the impact on a victim over other factors when determining appropriate sentences for young people.

Furthermore, we are moving to an opt-out model of contact with victims and their families whereby they do not need to apply to be placed on a register to remain updated on the offender's custody movements. Instead, we will assume they do want and need to know this information and not place the burden of seeking it out on them. We will also ensure the immediate family of a victim can be present during criminal proceedings and remove the court's existing powers to exclude any person who has access to the proceedings. Again, I cannot believe we had to do this. These people should always have had a right to view the trial of a person who has committed a crime against their loved one or loved ones. Importantly, instead of remaining in juvie or being released too early into the community, detainees will now be transferred to adult custody after they turn 18.

Juvenile crime has been an issue in my own electorate of Glass House. In October, a 15-year-old boy was assaulted in a tunnel at the Beerwah Skate Park by a group of 17-year-olds while he waited for his mum to pick him up from school. His twin was the one who found him bleeding and unconscious. Just last week, a teenager stole a car in the early hours of the morning from a Caboolture family and barrelled it down the highway, pushing other vehicles out of the way and wiping out cars. Earlier this year, two gun-wielding teenagers, aged 14 and 17, led the police on a wild highway goose chase from the Gold Coast to Caboolture after attempting an armed hold-up.

Under Labor and its soft-on-crime laws, young offenders with a rap sheet a mile long have been able to steal cars and take the lives of innocent Queenslanders. In most cases, these young offenders end up being found guilty of manslaughter, which under the current laws carries a maximum sentence

of 10 years—but keep in mind that is the absolute maximum. Many young criminals are barely serving any time. If the Making Queensland Safer Laws had been legislated prior to these tragic incidents, the drivers would have received a maximum sentence of life detention, with a minimum non-parole period of 15 years.

This bill will remove the maximum-penalty constraints in the Youth Justice Act on 13 Criminal Code offences being: murder; manslaughter; unlawful striking causing death; acts intended to cause grievous bodily harm and other malicious acts; grievous bodily harm; wounding; dangerous operation of a vehicle; serious assault; unlawful use or possession of motor vehicles, aircraft or vessels; robbery; burglary; entering or being in premises and committing indictable offences; and unlawful entry of vehicle for committing indictable offences. These are all very serious crimes that do not just accidentally happen. They require planning and intent: they are premeditated. These laws are not intended to trap good kids who are caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, or someone who has just slipped up once. They are for the hardened, usually repeat offenders who pose an incredibly serious threat to our communities.

Yes, there are some who voiced concerns that these laws are simply going in too hard. To those, I would like to highlight that our government will be bolstering early intervention programs and rehabilitation opportunities to support at-risk youths. We will get tough on the cohort of repeat young offenders created by Labor's do-nothing approach, but we want to help other young people, before they become hardened crims, to see a brighter future.

It is important that we invest in the wellbeing of young people who are at risk and those who are at the other end of the pipeline, those being released from detention. Once they are out of jail, we want to help them stay out and make a good new life for themselves. Support every step of the way is critical and we plan to deliver it. Our Staying on Track program represents a \$175 million investment, providing 12-month post-release support where a community organisation will work directly with young people before they even leave youth detention to help bridge the transition back into the community. This offers the all-important support network that we know is critical to preventing offenders from relapsing back into a life of crime.

We are also so proud to present our Regional Reset programs, a \$50 million investment in nine early intervention residential programs that will provide 24/7 intensive support for at-risk young people who require a higher level of care than community-based programs are able to provide. It does not end there. Circuit Breaker Sentencing will provide \$80 million towards three- to six-month rehabilitation programs as an alternative to detention. While detention should not be a last resort, we recognise it is not always the most appropriate option either.

Finally, our gold standard early intervention program will invest in community-led initiatives focusing on reducing crime and boosting education, training and/or employment because busy kids do not have time to be out on the streets causing the chaos they have been causing. These laws are tough. We put them to the people of Queensland at the last election and Queenslanders have backed them in; they have entrusted us to deliver on them. Therefore, this bill has my complete support.