




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2024

QUEENSLAND COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (5.46 pm): I rise to contribute to the Queensland Community Safety Bill 2024 and to address two specific elements contained within the bill. Concerns around this bill have been a hot topic in the electorate of Glass House ever since it was first introduced back in May. Local residents have largely been concerned about the impact that the Weapons Act amendments would have on law-abiding firearm owners. To be blunt, I wholeheartedly shared their concerns. Initially they expressed their frustration that there were just two weeks to make submissions on this sizeable bill—a bill that has garnered a huge amount of community interest statewide. That timeframe was criminally short. The LNP wrote to the committee and the government requesting that the consultation period be extended. I was hopeful this would be approved. It was not, and I should not have been surprised. This Labor government have turned parliament into a legislative sausage factory.

Fast-forward to now, almost four months later. Widespread community fear remains regarding the Weapons Act amendments. Imagine if there had been better engagement, especially with law-abiding firearm owners, from the start. Perhaps those fears could have been allayed. I have listened to the unease of my constituents and sympathise that this Labor government continues to make life hard for law-abiding firearm owners rather than actually going after people doing the wrong thing.

This bill misses an important opportunity to get tough on criminals with firearms. It refers to an increase in firearm theft but does nothing to address it. Instead, it unfairly concentrates on licensed shooters. We know that in Queensland theft from licensed individuals and firearm dealers is one of the most used methods to move firearms from the legal market to the black market. According to the ACIC, very often these stolen firearms come into the possession of organised crime groups. ACIC conservatively estimate that there are 200,000 firearms in that domestic black market. We need to be creating legislation that increases the maximum penalty for stealing firearms or ammunition. Currently the penalty for stealing a firearm is 10 years imprisonment, which falls below the maximum penalty imposed by other states such as New South Wales and Western Australia. If other states are doing their due diligence by cracking down on this domestic illicit market, why aren't we? It is for this reason the LNP seeks to move amendments to the bill which will increase the maximum penalty for stealing a firearm from 10 to 14 years.

Today the shadow minister for police tabled an amendment to section 398 of the Criminal Code to increase that maximum penalty. The amendment has my full support as evidence has shown that since Western Australia increased their maximum penalty for firearm theft reported cases decreased 20 per cent from 2022 to 2023. There is proof that this will work. It just requires a government with the drive to actually crack down on crime. Let's see if this Miles Labor government will back those amendments.

The other concerns raised with me have been around the introduction of a firearms prohibition order scheme, the introduction of a new verification process for purchasing small arms ammunition and just who would be excluded from possessing a firearm for the mandatory five-year exclusion period. At the outset, I say there are people who should not be allowed to own a weapon—no-one disputes that—but we need to be careful about unintended consequences.

I have listened carefully to the minister's second reading speech and viewed the amendments he is proposing and, yes, he has clarified who would be a fit and proper person regarding convictions. I expressly note that the explanatory notes to the amendments say they will clarify in the Weapons Act that when making weapons licensing decisions and applying the compulsory exclusionary period as inserted by the bill, non-recorded convictions are not captured under the non-discretionary application of the fit and proper person test of proposed new sections 10B(4), 10B(5), 10C(2) and 10C(3)(a) but under the discretionary test of sections 10B(1) and 10C(1). The minister has also clarified that, if the small arms ammunition register is down, licensed firearm owners can still buy ammunition. The dealer will need to keep a record of who they have sold it to and when the system goes back up they will need to check if that individual was prohibited and, if they were, notify the police. I do believe these clarifications address the primary concerns raised with me by law-abiding firearm owners in the electorate of Glass House.

Let me move quickly on to the youth justice section of the bill. I and the LNP will always support measures taken to combat the growing youth crime crisis in Queensland. However, this bill does not go far enough. To paint the picture of how dire this crisis is, currently more than half of all criminals committing car thefts and break-ins are children aged 10 to 17. In 2019 Minister Farmer said that her government had a genuine interest in taking youth justice reform out of the too-hard basket and sorting it out once and for all. I guess it never did make it out of the basket. In fact, I think several padlocks have been added to the basket since 2018 as not only is this government not taking any decisive action on youth crime; but also it seems determined to quash any policy suggestions and amendments from our side of the House, and a number have been put forward by our shadow minister to this piece of legislation.

In closing, I had a number of constituents tell me that if I do not vote against this bill they will not vote for me. I wish it was that simple. This is a large bill. There is a lot of good elements to it. It goes some way to addressing the youth crime crisis but it could go further. It raises concerns for law-abiding firearm owners without addressing criminals stealing weapons. Yes, many of those concerns have subsequently and at the last minute been addressed by the amendments moved by the minister earlier today. As such, the LNP will not oppose the legislation, but we will try to amend it. I appreciate that may not be enough for those constituents, but I encourage them to listen to or read this contribution and the contributions of others on the LNP side of this chamber to understand why I and the LNP do so.

As I note we are only minutes away from the guillotining of this debate—a debate that has meant much to many in this chamber—I table page 1 of the speaking list and note the many members on the LNP side of the House who will not have an opportunity to speak because in a couple of minutes this debate will again be shut down by this tired, chaotic Miles Labor government.

Tabled paper: Document, undated, speaking list titled 'Community Safety Bill—p1 of 2' [1585](#).