




Speech By  
**Bree James**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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**MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL**

 **Ms JAMES** (Barron River—LNP) (3.31 pm): Today I rise to represent the voice of Far North Queensland in support of the Making Queensland Safer Bill. Crime in Far North Queensland is one of the biggest reasons that I stepped up to represent the people of Barron River. Crime is damaging the hearts and minds of our residents and the passion and success of small business. Worst of all, it is lowering the standard we expect of the next generation. When children in our community constantly see that their fellow youth can get away with doing the wrong thing, it lowers the standard. When children in our community can commit serious crimes and have no consequences, it shows that the rules do not apply to them. How is that fair? We get what we tolerate and we must not tolerate youth crime anymore.

Far North Queensland has long been dubbed 'the scary place' due to stingers, cyclones, crocodiles and having eight of the deadliest wildlife in the globe. In Far North Queensland, the thing that scares us most of all are 10- to 17-year-olds who are repeat youth offenders. Our tourists are being robbed by day and by night and are cutting short their holidays in Far North Queensland because they feel unsafe. Our bus drivers, taxidriver and train drivers are having rocks thrown at their windows as they drive. A young child visiting from Asia recently ended up with a serious head injury and in hospital instead of on holidays. Our business operators are losing thousands of dollars in revenue and productivity and are constantly worried about the safety of their clients and their staff.

The changes we are making have been developed from speaking and listening to thousands and thousands of Queenslanders who are sick of feeling unsafe in their homes, in their businesses and in their community. All of us on this side of the chamber have spoken to countless victims of crime. We have also spoken to police officers, lawyers, youth workers, teachers, business owners, parents and many experts who are begging for these changes.

A 14-year-old criminal has been committing repeated crimes on one family in my electorate for two years. This youth criminal has a 100-year ban from one of our major shopping centres due to their criminal behaviour. This person has stabbed a bus driver and caused emotional, mental and physical harm to many in our community without the consequences the community expects.

Holloways Beach is a suburb in my electorate that has had eight months of unprecedented crime. One couple leave their home for work at 3 am. They are that scared for anyone to know they have left their home that they leave with the lights of their vehicle off. They drive their car out of the driveway with the headlights off so that the known youth criminals on their street are unaware they have left for the day. If any of the neighbours go to the police they are harassed, abused and intimidated.

Two nights ago, one of our aged-care facilities, filled with our most vulnerable residents, was broken into at four o'clock in the morning by repeat youth offenders. I have had South Africans say that they feel crime is worse here than in their homeland. The fact is: when these repeat youth offenders are in detention, crime in our region drops. When they are released, crime increases again. What more evidence do we need?

There are 78 serious repeat youth offenders in Far North Queensland who in the past 12 months have committed at least 6,829 crimes—the most in the state. That is over 20 offences a day in Far North Queensland for the past 12 months. Most businesses and people do not even report anymore because there is nothing done, so these figures are much higher. It is easy for those in South-East Queensland to think that youth crime is not an issue, but in regional Queensland, especially Far North Queensland, it is destroying our cities. Across Queensland, serious repeat offenders make up 19 per cent of offenders but are responsible for more than 50 per cent of the offences committed. The police desperately want these laws. The small business community desperately want these laws. The community desperately want these laws. The people of Far North Queensland have had an absolute gutful of the soft laws that allow repeat youth offenders to continue to cause pain, damage and trauma to the citizens of our beautiful city.

One of the first lessons parents teach toddlers is that tea is hot or that stairs are dangerous. Children learn the hard way and learn to be cautious when there is a consequence for their action. When there are no consequences and there is a reward for bad behaviour, that behaviour will continue to escalate. This is how we have ended up here. We are creating a generation of kids with no self-responsibility. These youth criminals know the law and how to get past it. These youth criminals are not scared about breaking the law because they know that the rules do not apply to them. These youth criminals are not scared of the police. Things must change. We must put the rights of victims first and turn injustice into justice.

We are not only making these laws for the children who deserve to do adult time for their adult crime; we are also doing so much that will help Far North Queensland. We have the Staying on Track program; \$50 million for the nine Regional Reset programs; Circuit Breaker Sentencing; and \$40 million for two youth justice schools, one of which will be in Far North Queensland.

The Making Queensland Safer Laws are the laws we need. They are the laws this community expects and they are the laws that will see the change that Queenslanders, especially those in Far North Queensland, all desperately want. I commend this bill to the House.