




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Ms MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (10.15 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Making Queensland Safer Bill. At the outset I would say that, like all of my colleagues on this side of the House, we strongly believe that Queenslanders deserve to be safe and to feel safe in our communities. We have seen an unacceptable level of crime in our suburbs and this cannot continue. Whether it is through direct conversations, emails or representations, many members of my community have been clear with me that they are deeply concerned with what is happening in our community.

As a local member, I actively monitor the crime statistics for my suburbs on a monthly basis and speak regularly to our local police when I see an escalation of crime in a particular area or suburb to better understand what may be happening. I regularly share the crime statistics with residents who speak with me about very high crime rates in their particular suburb. Those very same residents are somewhat surprised when they see the numbers compared to some of our neighbouring suburbs. All crime is terrible and there is no excuse that can allay the experiences that many people in our communities have shared with us of being broken into, feeling that loss of safety, of having their vehicle stolen and the impact this has on them. The invasion in their lives is real and we cannot excuse it.

I recall being in Townsville last year, where I met a mother who shared with me her trauma when her family's home was broken into and the impact this was having on her young child, who was frightened and refused to sleep in his own bed. She also told me that every morning she would wake up, grab a coffee and open her computer to her local community Facebook page to scroll through all of the crime posts. Sometimes when crime is raised with me and I query the specifics of what has happened to that person, I find that in fact they have never been the victim of crime but they have seen enough videos or posts on social media to warrant a deep fear. This has become a psychological issue for many people in our community, and that is deeply concerning to witness and very difficult to overcome.

Despite what the police minister said, I believe that as a Labor government we worked hard to strengthen our response to youth crime, particularly for serious repeat offenders. We introduced breach of bail as an offence. We made it more difficult for serious repeat offenders to get bail by expanding the list of offences with a presumption against bail. We introduced harsher maximum penalties for unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences if the person is armed, uses violence or where the offending is published on social media. We extended the maximum term of a conditional release order from three to six months, allowing additional supervision and rehabilitative programs to be undertaken. We also introduced a fast-track sentencing program in Brisbane, Townsville, Southport and Cairns to ensure young people spent less time on remand and more time serving their sentences. We provided additional police funding to conduct extra high-visibility police patrols in areas of concern, including public spaces and residential areas.

We introduced youth co-responder teams made up of police and youth justice workers who patrol the streets together to improve community safety, and I know this is working in the Ipswich region. We also introduced new laws to ban the sale of knives and other items to minors which further supported Jack's Law—the nation-leading legislation that authorises police wandering operations.

This is just a fraction of what we did. Despite all of this work, investment and reform, Queenslanders simply did not believe that we could keep them safe, and I understand this. Many of them expressed this at the ballot box in October, and I acknowledge that certainly in my area the LNP's Adult Crime, Adult Time slogan did convince many voters. I also acknowledge that the LNP have formed government and do have a mandate of sorts to introduce a new sentencing regime as per clause 19 of the bill and to have this in place before Christmas, as per the now Premier's public statements. The Premier said during the leaders debate—

I've written the legislation, by the end of the year it will be law.

The Labor opposition has recognised that the Queensland community wanted a change in approach and was willing to accept this approach despite it only being a slogan, because this is what many Queenslanders voted for. However, what is clear is that the Making Queensland Safer Bill makes substantial and wide-reaching changes to the justice and youth justice landscape in Queensland that were clearly not canvassed during the general election. The Labor opposition, along with a plethora of legal, youth justice and victim representative stakeholders, have raised significant concerns about the unintended negative consequences of this proposed legislation which is being rushed through with little regard for evidence-based and expert examination. The Homicide Victims' Support Group in their submission stated—

Firstly, we urge the Government not to rush through key pieces of legislation. We recognise that the Government did state it would be a priority, but victims of crime have had a lifetime of Governments doing things to them and when legislation like this is rushed it can have unintended consequences and it can also trigger victims who already distrust Government.

The Queensland Victims' Commissioner, which the LNP when in opposition said they supported, was not even able to give verbal evidence for this bill given the committee's truncated review. Instead the commissioner wrote in her submission—

I note the short timeframe to provide a submission—only 3 business days. This timeframe ... is unrealistic for stakeholders—particularly victims, their families, communities, legal advocates, and service providers who will have very significant contributions to make. We must adopt a balanced, evidence-based approach to community safety for all and this is done through open, transparent, and accessible consultation.

VictimConnect in their submission stated—

We note that we would like greater detail of the bill for VictimsConnect and the community, especially those who are impacted by crime, to provide the nuanced consideration and consultation necessary to satisfy all questions about how proposed changes can safely and effectively keep Queenslanders safe.

The LNP government has always claimed that the voices and the rights of victims would have primacy, but here are just three examples of where victims' advocates are seeking more time and more support from the LNP government to better understand what this will mean for victims. The adage of 'we know what's good for you' is simply disrespectful and arrogant and goes against the very things this government espoused when they were in opposition.

Given the woeful period provided to review the bill, I wish to commend the 176 submitters who did not allow the deliberately truncated committee process to deter them from providing an analysis of the legislation. Many of the submitters have been able to draw out the significant potential consequences of these changes to law including: potential negative impacts on victims during the court process, including the potential for victims to be cross-examined; the likelihood that victims who are less articulate will see lighter sentences for their offenders than those who are more articulate; delays in the court process times due to fewer plea deals occurring; and a change in the pattern of guilty pleas being entered resulting in more contested trial proceedings which would in turn create delays in the court system—again, a longer time for victims to have their matters resolved.

I ask whether the Attorney-General understands and recognises these potential issues that will impact our courts and what is the government's proposed solution. We have already heard that these changes will have a significant capacity impact in Queensland's detention centres and watch houses, with potential workplace health and safety issues for those who staff these facilities. Again, one must ask the Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services what the plan is to create immediate capacity in the system and how she will protect hardworking frontline public servants who are expected to manage this increased intake.

We know that all evidence points to the fact that tougher penalties are not a silver bullet. Targeted prevention and intervention are critical if we are to have any impact on reducing youth crime in our state. The LNP itself spoke of gold standard early intervention, though we are yet to see any details of what this will look like. As acknowledged by the Attorney-General in the statement of compatibility for the bill—

The amendments will lead to sentences for children that are more punitive than necessary to achieve community safety.

As noted by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak, QATSICPP, in their submission—

Legislative changes which encourage more punitive punishments than are necessary risk significantly undermining the Queensland Government's stated aim, to create a world class early intervention system in Queensland.

There was an opportunity for the LNP government to do the right thing tonight to allow further consideration of key elements of this bill—elements which so many stakeholders have expressed need further consideration to ensure there are not unintended negative consequences. Today I have shared the words of stakeholders and made sure they were on the record because it is clear that the LNP has chosen to not listen to expert advice, to not listen to those with lived experiences, including victim representatives. In fact, the Premier went even further, saying of stakeholders in a backhanded criticism—

With respect to some of the different views on one part of our youth crime strategy, it's been the same voices that have led to the laws being weakened a decade ago.

That is a disrespectful way to speak of frontline organisations which spend each and every day doing some of the most important and valued advocacy work, including Bravehearts, yourtown and Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion. This legislation has been rushed and the Labor opposition along with stakeholders have attempted to raise the alarm. I urge the LNP government to support the shadow attorney-general's amendments: allow the parliament in 18 months to consider the outcomes of their rushed legislation to better understand the consequences, what it means for capacity in detention centres and watch houses and, most importantly, whether the LNP have kept their much lauded promises to Queenslanders and have reduced victim numbers.