




Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

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**SUMMARY OFFENCES (PREVENTION OF KNIFE CRIME) AND OTHER  
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (12.10 pm): I rise to address the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. As I have often said, including here in the Queensland parliament, one of the most fundamental duties of any elected government is to ensure the safety and security of its citizens. It is a responsibility that is absolute and it is a responsibility that is non-negotiable. There is no doubt that this Labor state government has failed in this most fundamental duty. It is a failure that has only been compounded over the last nine years because the Labor government has failed to act and, as a consequence, there has been fear, pain, heartbreak and devastating impacts to communities right across Queensland. It is in this context that Queenslanders must view this legislation.

The Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 will seek to: prohibit the sale of knives and other weapons known as controlled items to minors; make it an offence for a person to falsely represent themselves as being over the age of 18 years for the purpose of being sold a controlled item; require retailers to display signage advertising the legal prohibition against the sale of controlled items to minors; and prohibit controlled items from being sold or advertised in a way that suggests the item is suitable for combat, intended to be used for violence, or likely to stimulate or encourage violent or criminal behaviour involving the item.

This legislation will also impose obligations upon suppliers of particular controlled items to safely secure the items at retail locations. The legislation will also make consequential amendments to support these reforms such as allowing a police officer to request to see proof of age if they see or reasonably suspect a person under the age of 18 has been sold a controlled item, and authorising the police officer to seize the item under certain circumstances. Consequently, amendments will be made to both the Summary Offences Act 2005 and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 to enable this legislation.

There is no question that every available legislative instrument and resource that can be provided must be provided to our dedicated frontline Queensland Police Service officers in order to combat Queensland's youth crime crisis. This legislation is a welcomed addition and one that is well overdue, considering that for too long Queensland remained the only state jurisdiction that did not comprehensively legislate for the restriction of the sale of knives. However, it must be noted that there are those who have articulated genuine concerns in relation to the timing, efficacy and overall impact of these laws which warrant further examination and consideration by the Labor state government. Indeed, whilst under this legislation the definition of 'sell' includes sales that are made online or at any place and sales outside of Queensland to a person in Queensland, it has been suggested that in all likelihood and reality it would be extremely difficult to enforce and secure a prosecution for online purchases made outside Queensland. Accordingly, the effectiveness of this provision to prevent sale to young Queenslanders remains highly doubtful.

Further, I understand there has been limited evidence produced as to the sources of knives that are carried by offenders and, what is more, questions remain as to the evidence that offenders will be deterred from carrying knives, let alone change the current knife culture. It has to be said that in Queensland we all have a responsibility to tackle the knife culture, particularly amongst young people, whether that is representatives here in the Queensland parliament, our community leaders, our school principals and others to change that knife culture. Certainly in our schools we have seen many instances in relation to weapons offences, so via the Department of Education there needs to be a greater effort put in to education amongst young people to ensure what happens in the broader community is reduced. I know the member for Mackay talked about young people and their neurodevelopment occurring throughout their adolescent years. The brain takes up to about 25 years of age for that development, and we know that many young people make poor choices and decisions because they are still going through those developmental phases.

I also want to highlight, as a part of the debate, the submission provided to the Queensland parliament's State Development and Regional Industries Committee by the Queensland Law Society on this legislation wherein they stated—

There is no conclusive evidence that this type of legislation will be effective in terms of the objective that it is trying to achieve. Instead, this approach will lead to unintended consequences and will not address the root cause of the conduct it seeks to address. The evidence shows that the mechanisms to achieve the objective involves supporting families and young people and diverting children and young people into positive programs.

That is the point. Ever since Labor weakened Queensland's youth justice laws in 2015, successive Labor state governments have allowed the youth crime crisis to worsen, and at every turn they have failed to implement the solutions, including comprehensive intervention and prevention measures that are actually required to keep our communities safe.

Within the Brisbane region, including the electorate of Moggill, recent data from the Queensland police shows that from 2015 to 2023: car theft has increased by 114 per cent; break and enters have increased by 57 per cent; thefts have increased by 76 per cent; and assaults have skyrocketed by 155 per cent. I am regularly contacted by local residents and community members who share with me their deep concerns and often lived experiences as a result of Labor's youth crime crisis. In fact, just last week, I received this message from a resident who said they felt compelled to share with me the following after they personally reviewed the latest local crime statistics—

I am writing to you with deep concern regarding the current state of crime in our community, particularly the alarming increase in youth crime. Over the past few months, the incidence of crime, especially amongst young people, has reached unacceptable levels. The impact of these crime extends beyond mere statistics; it is causing distress, fear and disruption to the lives of residents. Moreover, it threatens the safety and security of our community as a whole.

This message is from another local resident, this time detailing what happened to his father. He states—

While my father slept, someone broke into his car and into his home, they stole valuables, but more importantly, it put his life in danger... My family moved from South Africa to Australia to get away from the crime and sadly, we have now dealt with more crime, personally, here in Australia than we did in South Africa. We are now forced to put up cameras, security lighting and other measures to try and deter these criminals.

What compounds this pain even further is the fact that I received this correspondence from this resident almost a year to the day from when he had contacted me to share the details of break and enters happening to other family members, so it is no wonder that this resident felt that 'clearly nothing has been done to resolve the ever-growing crime problem'. This is just a handful of the many local stories I receive about the impacts of this third-term Labor state government's watering down of criminal laws, together with their reduction in police numbers.

Unlike the Labor government, the Liberal National Party has announced practical solutions to tackle Queensland's youth crime crisis which will reduce crime, including: rewriting the Youth Justice Act and embedding consequences for actions; putting victims' rights ahead of young criminals'; unshackling the judiciary by removing Labor's policy of detention as a last resort; delivering gold standard early intervention to turn around young offenders; prioritising discipline, guidance and opportunity for children in residential care to prevent them from ending up in the youth justice system; and attracting and retaining more police by giving them the laws and resources needed to do their job.

As foreshadowed by the LNP shadow minister for police and community safety, the LNP, as a part of this debate, is introducing critical amendments to Queensland's youth crime laws, including to: amend the Youth Justice Act to remove the provision of detention as a last resort; and amend the Childrens Court Act to remove the provision excluding victims and their families from Childrens Court on the basis of prejudice to offenders and to reopen the court to the media for greater scrutiny. I encourage all elected representatives to fully consider these amendments to make our communities safer and provide much needed transparency.

For too long, Queenslanders have been forced to endure the chaos and crisis of this Labor government and Queensland's youth crime crisis. Queenslanders deserve to live safely within their communities, to have their properties respected and protected, and to live free from the fear of rampant crime. As we know, towards the end of this year in October, all Queenslanders will have the opportunity to elect an LNP government which will ensure our communities are safe. We must do more to protect our communities. We must reduce crime in all electorates and in all communities right across Queensland. Certainly to date, we have seen the failure of the state Labor government. They have failed since 2015 when they were first elected. They watered down the laws. We have seen the consequences when it comes to rampant crime, whether that be youth crime or that committed by even more senior offenders. It is simply not good enough. It is a government's responsibility to protect its citizens, to act in their interests and to provide all available resources to make sure they are looked after.

People are being attacked personally, are violated in their homes and are having their possessions stolen. The consequences to them personally, to their families and to their communities is clearly unacceptable. When it comes to knives here in Queensland, we need to change the culture. We need to ensure young people understand there is no place for carrying such weapons in public, let alone using them, and the real harm and consequences that occur as a result of them doing that. That will take a combined effort with leadership from all elected representatives here in the Queensland parliament, all of our community leaders, those who are in our schools and the broader community. Certainly whilst this legislation in part will address that, there is still a lot more work that needs to be done here in Queensland.