




Speech By
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MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (11.07 pm): I rise to address the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024. In contributing to this debate I am reminded of a local mother whose children were left traumatised following a break and enter offence by young criminals. I am also thinking of the local small businesses across Chapel Hill and Kenmore whose shopfronts were smashed and small businesses who had their goods stolen. I am also thinking of the local tradie whose work vehicle, which was parked at his home, was broken into and thousands of dollars worth of tools stolen.

This bill is more than legislation; it represents a critical step in fulfilling the promise that a Liberal National Party made to the people of Queensland to restore safety to our communities and uphold the rights of victims over the rights of offenders. As much as the Labor state opposition might try to deny it, this commitment was overwhelmingly endorsed by Queenslanders at the last state election. The Liberal National Party has a strong mandate to pass these laws and pass them this week. Queenslanders called for urgent action to tackle the youth crime epidemic which has plagued our state for far too long. They demanded laws that reflect their expectations, laws that protect their families and laws that restore confidence in the justice system. That is precisely what this legislation delivers.

This legislation not only demonstrates the Crisafulli LNP state government's commitment to community safety, but also lays bare the abysmal track record of the Labor Party when it comes to law and order and community safety. For a decade Labor ignored the rising tide of youth crime, ignoring the voices of victims and allowing youth offenders to run rampant across our state. The result has been communities living in fear.

Under the former Miles state Labor government, serious repeat youth offenders avoided adequate punishment, leaving families and communities at the mercy of individuals who should have been held accountable. Queenslanders deserve better than this. They deserve to feel safe in their homes, workplaces and communities. However, in too many parts of our state that has simply not been the reality.

The Liberal National Party state government, with the full endorsement of the people of Queensland, refuses to accept Labor's status quo. The Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 is a comprehensive, tough and fair response to the challenges our communities face. It puts the rights of victims above the rights of offenders and gives the judiciary greater direction to impose penalties that meet community expectations. This bill introduces key changes that address the failings of the past. When sentencing, courts will now have the ability to consider an offender's complete criminal history, enabling a more accurate assessment of patterns of offending. No longer will repeat offenders escape the consequences of their actions simply because of procedural failings.

Additionally, the Liberal National Party's opening up of the Childrens Court to allow victims, their families and the media more transparency throughout the judicial process is welcomed. Queenslanders told us this was desperately needed and we listened. Victims of crime have had enough of seeing youth

offenders shielded from scrutiny while they are left to suffer in silence. Unlike the Labor Party, we are unwavering in our support for victims of crime and their families. These laws will ensure their voices are heard, their pain acknowledged and their rights respected.

While Queenslanders rightly called for tougher laws to keep dangerous repeat offenders off our streets, the Crisafulli LNP state government knows that prevention is just as critical as enforcement. That is why the Liberal National Party state government is committed to making significant investments in early intervention and prevention strategies to break the cycle of youth crime and, in doing so, ensure a safer future for all Queenslanders. Our approach is clear: intervene early, support rehabilitation and provide opportunities for young people to change their trajectory of a life of crime before it is too late.

We have allocated \$175 million to Staying on Track, a program providing 12-month post-detention release support. This initiative partners young people with non-government organisations, bridging their transition from youth detention centres to community life and offering stability, education and employment opportunities. For those who need intensive care, we are investing \$50 million in nine Regional Reset programs across Queensland. These short-stay residential programs offer 24/7 support for at-risk youth referred by schools, police, Child Safety or parents. Our \$80 million Circuit Breaker Sentencing initiative offers three- to six-month rehabilitation programs as an alternative to detention, supporting up to 60 young people at a time and focusing on meaningful rehabilitation.

Additionally, we are investing \$100 million in community-led initiatives, with \$50 million to fund innovative ideas and another \$50 million to expand proven strategies. Of course, we know that education remains key when we are discussing prevention and rehabilitation. That is why we are dedicating \$40 million to two youth justice schools to divert young offenders from crime and \$40 million to four early intervention schools to re-engage 900 students who have fallen out of mainstream education and who are at risk. These programs are more than numbers. They represent hope, opportunity and a commitment to addressing the root causes of crime. By investing in prevention, we are investing in the future of our youth and the safety of our communities.

I want to contrast the decisive, strong and considered approach of this LNP state government with the Labor Party's track record: a decade of complacency, broken promises and policies that put offenders' rights above community safety. The Labor state opposition is desperate, disorganised and utterly disconnected from the realities faced by everyday Queenslanders. They have spent 10 years ignoring the voices of victims. They failed to act when they had the chance and now they want to obstruct the progress that we are trying to make. The Labor Party has never been committed to community safety, never prioritised the rights of victims and never delivered laws to address serious crime effectively. Their record is one of abject failure and Queenslanders know it.

Our government's approach is different. We are taking decisive action because Queenslanders want strong, effective laws that reflect their expectations and deliver results. They are sick and tired of seeing offenders treated with leniency while victims are left to pick up the pieces. This legislation is about restoring faith in the justice system, protecting our most vulnerable and ensuring a brighter, safer future for all Queenslanders.

Under the former Palaszczuk-Miles state Labor government, Labor's desperate attempts to manipulate and misinform Queenslanders on the realities of the youth crime crisis knew no bounds. This was evident even throughout the recent 2024 state election campaign and, in particular, the campaign in the electorate of Moggill. On 9 October, whilst participating in a local candidate debate in which the Greens candidate did not participate, local residents were shocked when Labor's candidate for Moggill made the breathtaking statement—

There needs to be some honesty, and that's not what we are seeing. Overall in Queensland, we are at near-record low rates of youth crime.

Such a misinformed and grossly false statement shows why the Labor candidate was never a serious or genuine contender to be an elected representative in the Queensland parliament. It also shows why Labor's vote in Moggill, like much of the rest of Queensland, went backwards. For the benefit of local residents, Queenslanders and members of the Labor opposition, I will provide the honesty that the Labor candidate for Moggill tried to avoid.

At every possible opportunity, former Labor ministers, Labor members and Labor candidates repeatedly told Queenslanders, including the media, that youth crime was decreasing. They said that knowing full well, and all along, that it was actually increasing. Since the 2024 state election, the incoming briefs provided to the Crisafulli LNP state government have exposed the inescapable truth that the former Labor government sought to deny Queenslanders. Under the former Labor government, in the past financial year there were over 46,100 finalised proven offences by young people. That represents a 12 per cent increase in the past year, a 51 per cent increase in the past five years and a

98 per cent increase over the past 10 years, with an additional almost 23,000 offences. More disturbingly, already this year there have been more than 50,000 offences committed by youth offenders. These are the facts.

In concluding my contribution today, I want all members of the Labor opposition and their supporters to know this: your decade of failure is over. The people of Queensland have entrusted the Crisafulli LNP state government with the responsibility of fixing the mess that Labor has left behind and we will not let Queenslanders down. This legislation is evidence of that commitment. It is strong, it is fair and it is urgently needed. Unlike the Labor members for Miller, Bulimba and Waterford, who have no interest or concern in preventing youth crime or ensuring community safety, as evidenced by their former state Labor government's actions, the Liberal National Party will restore confidence in our justice system. As such, I commend this bill to the House.