




Speech By  
**Christopher Whiting**

**MEMBER FOR BANCROFT**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 December 2024

**MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL**

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (10.19 pm): I rise to speak on the bill before us. As we have heard from our Labor members, we will not stand in the way of the LNP increasing maximum sentences. That meets the needs of people in society. I listened carefully to the member for Townsville, talking about his harrowing stories of what has happened there. It reminded me that I have seen three cycles of youth crime go through the region and the community over the 20-odd years that I have been representing my community. It is never easy. I sincerely believe the laws before the House will actually not meet the LNP promise of keeping Queenslanders safe. I do believe there are elements of the bill that will undermine protection for victims.

The member for Gaven made it clear that some of the measures in this bill have the potential for a range of unintended consequences. The member made clear Queenslanders did not vote for laws that potentially put victims on trial because there is that possibility, as we have heard, that victims could be cross-examined. Every single expert in the bill's hearing stated that if the impacts on victims is one of the primary principles, there is a possibility that defence lawyers will get that opportunity to cross-examine the victim there.

**Mr Hunt:** No, not true.

**Mr WHITING:** The member ahead of me is having another go. He has already had one go. We have listened to you in silence. Now give us the same opportunity.

**Mr Head:** Well, start speaking the truth then.

**Mr WHITING:** Do you really want to go through it like this?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Furner): Member for Bancroft, please take your seat. I think there is a point of order.

**Mr KEMPTON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member is clearly directing his comments towards somebody who is not involved in this debate. If he has an objection, he should make it to you, not to the member.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I take that point. The member for Bancroft did make a relevant point in terms of the previous government speakers having been heard in silence. I expect the same to apply to every other speaker from here on, otherwise I will be taking action against anyone who interjects.

**Mr WHITING:** We know that Queenslanders did not vote to end restorative justice. That is a process that has been supported by many victims groups. As we heard from the member for Bulimba, satisfaction with restorative justice sits above 70 per cent for some groups. I heard the member for Hervey Bay saying before it does not work for everyone, but for many people it does.

The LNP are ramming through laws that, as the experts we heard from have said, may make the system worse. It will have unintended consequences. Bravehearts said—

Adopting policies that are not based on evidence and careful scrutiny of their impact on our children and young people, would be a grave error.

The Queensland Mental Health Commission stated—

It is noted the short timeframe for consultation on the Bill may lead to unintended consequences.

The Independent Ministerial Advisory Council said—

It is the view of the IMAC that the fast-tracked process for developing this legislation has not allowed for an appropriate and evidence-based consideration of complex issues and any potential unintended consequences of the Bill.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission, in Commissioner Lewis' submission, said—

The evidence is also clear that making laws without appropriately scrutinising the unintended consequences of those decisions, will ultimately have far reaching implications.

Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group said—

... when legislation like this is rushed it can have unintended consequences and it can also trigger victims who already distrust Government.

Associate Professor Terry Goldsworthy from Bond University said—

It is disappointing that such a tight timeframe was imposed on submissions in relation to this bill. It would have been much more prudent to allow sufficient time for comprehensive submissions to be made. The last time legislation was rushed through the parliamentary process like this it resulted in the ill-conceived and problematic VLAD anti-bikie laws that were a dismal failure in terms of combating organised crime.

The Queensland Council of Social Service stated—

The amendments in the Bill do not deliver evidence based initiatives that effectively empower victims and reduce reoffending.

The Queensland Law Society stated—

There is no evidence that lengthy custodial sentences deter young offenders.

I cannot remember seeing a bill that engenders so much opposition from those who work in those specialists areas. What we all glean from the comments by the submitters is that so many have said there could potentially be many unintended consequences. So many have said it possibly will not work as the LNP has promised. Everyone has said it is too rushed, even Voice for Victims.

Let's remember, no-one saw what the bill actually proposed before the election, and when it was exposed, everyone said it was full of potential unintended consequences and may make the situation worse. That is why we need more time to examine the bill to see if it would possibly make things worse for victims. I know the LNP opposite do care about victims, so I say to them, please take the extra six to eight weeks to scrutinise this bill properly to make sure we minimise any possible unintended consequences.

One of the best things you can say about this bill is that it is a pathway; it is not a solution. But it does complement the solutions we have already brought in over the past number of years. We brought in two weighty bills over the past two years. The LNP have always said that we watered down the laws 10 years ago. The truth is that in the last couple of years we brought in the toughest laws in Australia, led by evidence.

We invested significantly in community safety. Our Queensland Community Safety Bill, part of our Community Safety Plan, was backed by \$1.28 billion in investment. We backed our law changes with the investment that was needed to make them work. Those on the front line told us what was needed, and we listened to them. Our plan was working, with the police telling us—this is the police telling us—that there was a downward trend in offending.

In our plans and laws, we worked hard to strengthen our response to youth crime, particularly for repeat serious offenders. We introduced breach of bail conditions as an offence. We made it more difficult for serious repeat offenders to get bail by expanding the list of offences with the 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 spread 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.

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. When I last spoke in here on that, over 700 weapons had been taken off the streets, I do believe, and out of the shopping centres because of the wandering powers that we introduced.

What we do know is what makes Queensland safer. What will make Queensland safer? Supporting the family programs, the intervention and diversion programs that are already there. I spoke of this previously. The best gold standard program that we have in my area is Skilling Queenslanders for Work. It is crucial that funding be kept up for it. In our area, it created 80 community driven training programs, trained 3,300 people and put 2,200 people into work. That is 2,200 families that now have stability and income. I have seen that it changes the lives of not only young people and the people going through that program, but all their family around them.

One of the other things I want to point out as well is the very successful YAMBI program—I have talked about it before—run by Younity, a long-term community corporation. That is the key: having community corporations or organisations that can take on the burden of running these programs. They have run this with Youth Justice for years. It is successful. It includes intense engagement and case management for young people who have already been in the youth justice system.

These programs are there. They are already gold standard. We do want to make sure that Queenslanders feel safe, but the LNP's approach in this bill is flawed and rushed. When the laws do not reduce victim numbers, the LNP, as we heard earlier from the member for Gladstone, have asked public servants to find a different way of reporting the data. There is no investment in police, no extra court resources, no additional custodial capacity and no real intention from the LNP to make the community safer with funding to support our frontline services.