




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (4.31 pm): I rise to speak to the Summary Offences (Prevention of Knife Crime) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 and to speak in support of the amendments tabled by the member for Currumbin and to be moved by the member for Ninderry during consideration in detail. Here we are, yet again, debating a bill regarding juvenile crime in this state. Here we are, yet again, witnessing this government attempting to do something to address an issue that is spiralling out of control and tearing this state apart. On many occasions in this place I have spoken about the devastation that is being wreaked on communities such as Townsville and Cairns in the north. It continues to be committed on a daily basis in those particular communities. The calls from residents and business owners in those communities have not stopped. In fact, they have increased. People are fed up. The residents are fed up and the business owners are fed up. When they see this bill come before the parliament, we get a shrug of the shoulders and a roll of the eyes: here we go again. Here we go again, dragging this government kicking and screaming to the table.

Who can forget the manner in which those opposite treated our calls to have breach of bail reinstated in the state of Queensland? I brought before this parliament an amendment that was not supported by those opposite but subsequently adopted word for word. Here we are again, talking about removing detention as a last resort. Today is an opportunity for this government, if they are fair dinkum, to step up to the plate. The amendment has been tabled. We can have the debate and we can have it finalised this week.

Let us think for a moment about what that would mean for the judiciary. When young offenders come before the courts on serious offences such as burglary, dangerous driving and arson, the judiciary look at those juvenile offenders and their heads ring with the calls from the community to do something about it. Then they look down at section 150 of the Youth Justice Act, which says that detention is a last resort. They put their hands behind their backs because yet again they are shackled when it comes to the penalties they can impose on juvenile offenders. Members must make no mistake: the community is calling loudly and clearly for something to be done so that young offenders are held accountable for their actions. All the way along we have said that there needs to be consequences for actions. If they are committing serious offences then they need to be held to account.

Last week in my office a constituent asked me, 'Is it true, Dale, that they have to front court 20 times before the judiciary will even consider a term of imprisonment?' I said, 'I certainly hope not.' However, it appears to be the case that we are allowing juvenile offenders so much latitude before a term of imprisonment is imposed. We are allowing juvenile offenders to wreak havoc on our communities and to turn people's lives upside down. Then we turn to the judiciary, expecting them to impose a sentence of imprisonment when they are shackled.

The member for Currumbin tabled an amendment relating to who may be present at a proceeding. The amendment proposes that, for a criminal proceeding against a child, the court must permit a representative of the media to be present in the room. Further, the amendment proposes that, for a criminal proceeding against a child, a person may be present if, in the court's opinion, they have a proper interest in the proceeding and if, in the court's opinion, the person's presence would not be prejudicial to the interests of the child. I think that is fair enough. Victims and the media deserve the right to go to court and witness what occurs in that jurisdiction. The very least we can do is permit the media and victims to attend court and see firsthand just how an offender is dealt with, to hear what they have to say and to hear what their legal representative has to say. For too long they have operated behind closed doors and the public has been none the wiser.

I note that the objectives of the bill include prohibiting the sale of knives and other weapons, known as controlled weapons, to minors and requiring retailers to display signage advertising the prohibition on the sale of controlled items. Of course we want knives, machetes, axes et cetera off the street. Absolutely we want those items off the street. However, in 25 years of policing I never intercepted a juvenile offender who had a knife or machete that they had bought at a shop. In almost every case it had come from home, they had found it in the street somewhere or they had made it themselves. Therefore, whilst in some way this may reduce the incidence of those types of weapons being carried around, I do not think this bill goes far enough. I am not convinced that it goes far enough in preventing juvenile offenders from roaming our streets while carrying these types of weapons.

It concerns me that we are seeing an increase in violent crime across the state. It concerns me that innocent people are losing their lives because of the actions of juvenile offenders. A lot more needs to be done than what is proposed in the bill before us today. We know that under the watch of this Labor government the number of recidivist offenders has doubled and it is continuing to rise. It is all well and good to come in here and say that 50 per cent of offences are committed by recidivist offenders and then shrug your shoulders as if to say, 'There's not much we can do about that,' but that is where the work needs to start. We need to reduce the number of serial recidivist offenders if we are serious about addressing the juvenile crime problem that is gripping the state at the moment.

No doubt, this bill will have an impact on small and family business. It will have an impact on businesses like Albert's that sell axes and on hardware stores such as the small corner hardware stores scattered throughout my electorate. It will have an impact on those businesses. The jewellery shop at Moranbah, which sells knives, will no longer be able to sell those unless they are locked away inside their store. There will be far-reaching consequences when this bill is passed this week. I am not convinced that the support has been or will be forthcoming from this government to ensure a seamless transition in terms of this bill and the relevant regulations enacted in Queensland.

A lot more work needs to be done in the juvenile crime space. If we are serious about addressing juvenile crime in this state—and we all have talked about it many times in this place—we need to be doing a lot more than this. I certainly hope that this government has taken on board the feedback from the community. There is an opportunity this week, when the amendments are moved by the member for Ninderry tomorrow, for this government to support those amendments. Make no mistake, this will be a test. Queenslanders will be watching to see whether or not this government is fair dinkum about doing something in relation to these offenders and the offences that they are committing. The ball is in their court. We are all watching.