




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NINDERRY

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QUEENSLAND COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (3.29 pm): I rise today to contribute to the Community Safety Bill 2024, which is 180 pages dedicated to fixing a crime crisis of this government's own making. The highest priority of any government is to protect the safety of its citizens. There is no doubt that Queenslanders not only feel less safe than they did 10 years ago but the evidence indicates they are less safe. Under the LNP's tough crime laws back in 2012-14, QPS statistics revealed the number of crime victims in Queensland was trending down and had decreased by around 30,000. Before I address the amendments in this bill, it is important to look back at the path that led us here. Labor's first order of business when they won office in 2015 was to proudly water down the laws and implement their soft-on-crime regime. The Attorney-General said at the time—

Evidence clearly shows that increasing the severity of punishment does not reduce offending nor does it reduce reoffending.

...

This bill reflects evidence on what works to reduce youth offending.

In relation to breach of bail, the youth justice minister at the time said—

We repealed this offence in 2016 because the evidence is clear that harsher penalties do not work to reduce youth offending and they do not make our communities safer.

Since then crime has exploded and Queenslanders are less safe. Regardless of Labor's made-up metrics such as the ones we just heard, police have admitted that crime and the level of violent crime reached all-time highs by the end of 2023 and that trend was continuing into 2024. This admission was confirmed more recently by national crime data released by the ABS, which revealed that Queensland had the highest number of victims of crime in the nation in 2023—a staggering figure of almost 300,000 and an increase of 13 per cent on the previous year.

Crime has spiralled out of control over the past decade with assaults, car theft and robbery spiking nearly 300 per cent in parts of Queensland. Over a dozen people have died over the past few years at the hands of young killers. In a small and belated way the Community Safety Bill answers the LNP's calls for more protection through tougher laws. Do the ministers who conducted their soft-on-crime experiment, ministers who hold the same portfolios today, now acknowledge that by introducing this bill they admit they were wrong to introduce their soft-on-crime regime? Given the hundreds of thousands of lives negatively impacted by crime since they started their experiment, will they apologise to those families who have become victims of crime on their watch?

As part of their series of amendments to weaken the Youth Justice Act, Labor, along with reinstating detention as a last resort, closed the Childrens Court, keeping victims and the public's right to know out to protect the criminals within. The rights of young repeat violent offenders to harass, victimise and terrorise innocent families and communities with impunity is no longer reasonable, in my opinion. Regardless of your age, if you can steal a car, drive it dangerously and ram police, invade a home and stab someone with a knife, you are committing adult crimes and you should serve adult time.

Queenslanders have read too many tragic headlines of innocent victims of crime and innocent lives lost like Vyleen White, Emma Lovell, Matt Field and Kate Leadbetter. These devastating acts and these defenceless victims are just a few of too many to list here today. Too many families and communities have been torn apart by the crime crisis created by the Labor government here in Queensland. Behind every crime statistic is a victim—a victim who has been touched by crime and will never be the same again.

It is not just statistics and the number of victims that continue to rise under this government: the level of violence and criminality is rising too. This bill aims to address a whole new crime class, a level of violence never seen before in this state and rarely seen outside of Queensland—a crime class unique to Queensland and one created by a generation of untouchables: serious repeat violent offenders who just thumb their nose at police, steal cars and ram them. The new offences to combat serious vehicle offending, keep emergency service workers safe and protect emergency service vehicles are welcome, but it is another example of this bill trying to address a crime issue of this government's own making.

While Labor is fence-sitting when it comes to tackling youth crime and tinkering around the edges, the LNP does have a better way. I foreshadow that I will today table amendments to this bill to open the Childrens Court like it was before Labor closed it, because we know that for justice to be done it needs to be seen to be done. I also foreshadow that I will move amendments to this bill to remove detention as a last resort—not reword it—with the government's own documents admitting this will not change the law. I now table the amendments, the explanatory notes, the statement of compatibility and the statement about exceptional circumstances which I intend to move during consideration in detail.

Tabled paper: Queensland Community Safety Bill 2024, amendments to be moved by Mr Dan Purdie MP [1581](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Community Safety Bill 2024, explanatory notes to Mr Dan Purdie's amendments [1582](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Community Safety Bill 2024, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Mr Dan Purdie's amendments [1583](#).

Tabled paper: Queensland Community Safety Bill 2024, statement about exceptional circumstances contained in Mr Dan Purdie's amendments [1584](#).

I would now like to turn my attention to the firearm component of this bill. The government's own explanatory notes paint a dire and alarming picture of the explosion in gun violence, the proliferation of stolen firearms in our community, and the increasing number of organised crime groups, including outlaw motorcycle gangs, engaging in the use and trafficking of illegal firearms over the past 10 years. The explanatory notes state—

The rate of firearms reported as stolen has also increased by at least 21% within the last decade, with over 779 firearms reported stolen in 2023. Coupled with continuing challenges in recovering stolen firearms and the longevity of a functioning firearm, there is a corresponding increase in the risk that these weapons come into the possession of high-risk individuals and are used in the commission of an offence. The risk to the community is apparent when considering the increased number of reported offences involving firearms in Queensland, which has risen at least 30% in the last decade, with approximately 3,352 reported firearm offences in 2023.

What has the government done about this over the last 10 years, and where in this bill does it crack down on criminals who steal guns? Currently, the penalty for stealing a firearm is 10 years imprisonment. This falls below the maximum penalty imposed by other Australian jurisdictions—namely, New South Wales and Western Australia. In 2022 the Western Australian government increased penalties for stealing a firearm. Evidence has shown that since the penalty was increased to 14 years firearm theft has gone down 20 per cent between 2022 and 2023.

More than five years ago, in 2019 the LNP brought legislation into parliament to raise the maximum penalty for someone who steals a firearm or ammunition which proposed to increase the penalty from 10 years imprisonment to 14 years imprisonment, but this was ignored by the government. Since that time the number of firearms stolen in Queensland has increased by over 45 per cent. Over the past three years there have been almost 2,000 firearms stolen in Queensland. Knowing that police only recover about 25 per cent of stolen firearms, that is 15,000 firearms that are still in circulation in our community and no doubt unlawfully in the hands of people who would not be considered a fit and proper person to have them.

Today the LNP will show leadership and offer solutions. I will table amendments to increase the maximum penalty for stealing a firearm or ammunition in Queensland from 10 years to 14 years imprisonment. The LNP believes the focus should be applied to criminals who steal firearms because, as we have seen in other states, this does act as a deterrent and reduces the number of unlawful firearms that end up in the hands of violence criminals or organised criminal gangs, ultimately improving community safety.

Now I would like to turn to another form of gun crime which is not addressed in this bill or governed by a standalone offence which is further enabling criminal activity largely committed by organised crime groups—that is, drive-by shootings. Unsurprisingly, a good indicator of organised crime activity is the

number of drive-by shootings—an offence the police know is on the increase in Queensland. Drive-by shootings are becoming more commonplace not just in Queensland, which is why other states have been increasing penalties to capture this type of offending. These are just a few examples of this type of offending here in Queensland: in 2019 in Tara shots were fired into a child's room during a drive-by shooting; in March 2021 seven shots were fired at a house in Robinson, Brisbane, from a stolen BMW allegedly with strong ties to the Comanchero outlaw motorcycle gang; in April 2022 in north Brisbane police investigated a drive-by shooting after a family's home was fired at in the early hours of the morning; in November 2023 on the Gold Coast a man was arrested for firing a gun into the side of a car; and recently in June 2024 shots were fired into a Gold Coast home in Mudgeeraba, killing a dog and injuring a woman.

Typically, this type of offending is a key indicator of organised crime and too often innocent bystanders become the victims of these violent attacks. I said in my maiden speech that I am a firm believer that crime should be punished and when governments are perceived as—or actually are—too soft on crime, an inch given leads to a mile taken. I believe and will continue to argue that we must not give criminals and criminal organisations an inch as we constantly seek to provide Queenslanders with a safe and secure community.

As the increase in gun crime and organised crime activity is bringing the state of Queensland to its knees, the government have previously admitted in an answer to a question on notice that they could not accurately measure and therefore track this alarming crime trend because these crimes can be recorded as a minor good order offence. They are often recorded as a relatively minor offence such as wilful damage by firearm or dangerous conduct with a weapon, which carries a maximum penalty of four years compared to up to 16 years in other states like New South Wales, which has a dedicated drive-by shooting offence which has been operating for well over a decade. In fact, in 2012 the already existing offence was reviewed and a new aggravating form of drive-by shootings targeted at organised criminals was adopted, imposing a penalty of 16 years imprisonment. In his first reading speech New South Wales Attorney-General Greg Smith is quoted as saying—

The primary goal of the new offence is to recognise that a greater degree of criminality is involved where these shootings occur in connection with the activities of criminal groups, and to ensure that this is reflected in appropriately high penalties.

Labor have had a decade to follow in New South Wales's footsteps but their failure to do so has turned Queensland into a breeding ground for organised crime groups to engage in reckless behaviour, exposing Queenslanders to harm. That is why today I will be tabling an amendment to this bill to introduce a new offence to the Weapons Act to crack down on drive-by shootings. The offence named 'Firing at dwelling houses, buildings or vehicles'—drive-by shooting offence—will impose a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment for any person who fires a firearm at a dwelling house, another building or a vehicle with reckless disregard for the safety of any person. This will increase to 16 years for any person who fires a firearm in the course of an organised criminal activity. With the introduction of these two amendments, the LNP is today putting a firm marker in the ground that we will not give criminals, particularly criminals who steal and unlawfully use firearms, an inch.

I would like to turn my attention now to firearm prohibition orders. In mid-2015, while the government were frantically watering down youth crime laws, they must have forgotten they signed on to the National Organised Crime Response Plan, which was endorsed by all of the Commonwealth, state and territory attorneys-general and police ministers at the Law, Crime and Community Safety Council COAG committee meeting in Canberra. This plan proposed each jurisdiction consider the introduction of a firearms prohibition order scheme to address increasing concerns regarding the rising number of stolen firearms, the use of illicit firearms in the commission of an offence and the impact on the Australian community because of increasing firearm related offending.

Labor's amendments to the Weapons Act in this bill mark a decade of inaction which has meant violent perpetrators have been able to gain access to and use firearms to commit violent crimes. Labor have had their priorities all wrong for way too long. While they flapped around and spruiked their efforts to solve the domestic and family violence epidemic, under Labor's watch domestic violence offences involving firearms skyrocketed by 340 per cent. In 2012 there were 103; in 2022 there were 454. Always late to the party, Queensland Labor at the eleventh hour now respond to the 30 per cent increase of offences involving stolen firearms, an estimated 200,000 firearms in the illicit market and a 21 per cent increase in stolen firearms. While these trends have been plain to see over the past decade, it is only now that Queensland will introduce laws that will bring us into line with the rest of the country.

Currently, Queensland is the only jurisdiction in Australia that has not yet introduced an FPO scheme. The proposed firearm prohibition order scheme brings Queensland into line with other states and territories which introduced FPO schemes as part of the National Organised Crime Response Plan some time ago. The scheme prohibits a dangerous high-risk individual subject to an FPO from possessing, using or acquiring a firearm or firearm related item. It also empowers police officers to

conduct searches of the individual, their vehicle or residence to ensure they are complying with the order. Under this scheme, an FPO can be issued against high-risk individuals if the decision-maker is satisfied that it is in the public interest to make the order. It is not aimed at law-abiding registered firearm owners like farmers who are acting in accordance with their weapons licence. I acknowledge the minister for pointing that out in his recent speech.

This scheme is a hybrid scheme, unlike other jurisdictions. A 60-day FPO can be issued by a police commissioner or his delegate of rank no less than superintendent. A 10-year FPO will be issued by the court. A 60-day firearm prohibition order can be appealed after the 60-day period has lapsed. Under this scheme an FPO can be issued against high-risk individuals, such as organised crime, a terrorism threat or a high-end domestic and family violence offender, if the decision-maker is satisfied it is in the public interest to make the order. I acknowledge the minister's amendment earlier and thank him for our meeting last night and for listening as he acknowledged MPs in this House across both sides of the chamber, lobby groups and the law-abiding licensed firearm holders who had concerns around some definitions and the online registration check system.

Knife crime is another escalating issue in Queensland and I support the measures in this bill to increase the maximum penalty for someone found with a knife in a public place. I acknowledge that, in stark contrast to their views in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, tougher penalties do act as a strong deterrent, like it would with stealing firearms. I also support the expansion of the Jack's Law wandering trial, though I am aware police are concerned about knife crime in all public places, not just those on the prescribed list.

There is a lot to cover in this 180-page bill and I am mindful that a lot of other members want to contribute in the limited time that has been allocated for the debate. Queensland is coming last in the race to crack down on organised crime groups and high-risk individuals committing serious violent firearm offences. This is a Labor government that is slow moving. The police minister sat on his hands for almost 10 years before implementing an FPO scheme. Minister Ryan is the longest serving police minister in our state's history and under his watch violent crime involving weapons committed by high-risk individuals and organised crime gangs has increased over the past decade and maybe could have been prevented. This is another example of Labor having the wrong priorities and not giving our police the laws they need to do their job and keep Queenslanders safe.

If the government changes at the end of the year, the Making Queensland Safer Laws will be legislated. That will embed Adult Crime, Adult Time. If the government does not support our amendments today, we will open the Childrens Court and remove detention as a last resort and embed sentencing provisions that put the rights of victims ahead of offenders. There must be consequences for actions. We will get serious about gold standard early intervention and we will embark on rehabilitation with a purpose. I call on the government to support the amendments we have tabled today that will drive down crime and make Queensland safer.