




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Youth Crime

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): Queensland is in the grip of a youth crime crisis, fuelled by weaker laws and fewer police, with a generation of untouchables who know that their rights outweigh the rights of victims. How hard is it for a government to say sorry and admit they got it wrong? How hard is it for a government to admit that the decision to water down the Youth Justice Act and insert a provision that says detention must be a last resort was a mistake?

The Premier says he does not want to revisit that bad decision, but Queenslanders are living with it every day. Every day in their homes, in their businesses, in how they feel on the streets, they are living with that bad decision, and the leader of this state will not even accept responsibility for creating the mess in the first place.

The Attorney-General boasted when that legislation was changed in 2016. She trumpeted the weakening of those laws. Today the Attorney-General attempted to accept credit for reopening the courts that she closed nine years ago. How have we reached this point when no-one will accept responsibility for the heartache that this state is living through, the fear that everyday Queenslanders are experiencing?

The government is refusing to listen to Queenslanders when it comes to removing detention as a last resort. Victims want it removed. Frontline police want it removed. We know that even some of those members sitting opposite want it removed, and not just the members on the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee. We know that there were members in the cabinet who wanted to see that provision removed.

I think the 11-point plan may have been a 12-point plan until the chaos and crisis that we have seen unfold continued. I did not think we would see in this state a bigger circus than a month ago when the government took a decision to cabinet to cancel an Olympic and Paralympic Games that they bid for over 1,000 days before, and by the end of that day a government minister had leaked to the media and five other ministers confirmed it. I did not think we would live to see that. We have not even reached news time and already the leaks are starting from within the cabinet. That is how bad it is, that is how dysfunctional it is, that we now have ministers leaking against their own government when it comes to the removal of detention as a last resort and a Premier who will not accept responsibility.

The history of this is clear. The act was watered down in 2015 and it sent the clearest of signs to the police that it had a government that did not have its back and to victims that their rights did not count for anything. We are living that. Car theft is up 116 per cent since this government came to office, break-ins are up 54 per cent since this government came to office and assaults are up 220 per cent since this government came to office, yet we have a government that will not even look victims in the eye and say, 'We got it wrong.' It will not even admit that the decision to ensure detention as a last resort is something that they got wrong.

Members on this side of the House and I have personally made commitments to victims that we will fight for removal of the provision of detention as a last resort. I made that commitment to the Fields, to the Beasleys, to the Beaumonts, to the Whites and to every person who has been a victim of home invasions, of break-ins and of the feeling of violation. We have made that commitment and we will continue to pursue it. We have stood with business owners who have told us they cannot insure their businesses anymore. We have stood with home owners who tell us they cannot insure their cars anymore, and this government does not accept responsibility for creating that.

I want to unpack the government's announcement when it comes to police numbers. Before the last election, the government promised 1,450 additional full-time-equivalent frontline police officers. It is wonderful to see the police minister nodding. The government promised 1,450 additional full-time-equivalent frontline police officers, yet there are fewer today than when that commitment was made. That is the government's own figures. In a moment the member for Maroochydore will discuss the figures and the fact that the government is not releasing them as often as it promised it would, but I will tell members one thing: when a government makes a commitment to add 1,450 and the numbers go down by more than 70, I would suggest that is a cut of more than 1,500. That is what I would suggest. That is what that is. That is a Labor cut. That is a Labor cut—and the minister can attempt to parade all he likes—but if the net increase is going backwards rather than upwards, then, I am sorry, that is a reduction and therefore, as of today, the people of Queensland have been denied up to 1,500 officers that they were promised by this minister and this government. The announcement today counts for nothing because it is the same minister who made the same failed promise as part of the same cabinet, and nothing this government says has any credibility whatsoever.

In recent years we have seen, and the deputy leader articulated this in his question this morning, a 10-point, five-point, four-point, three-point plan—this was a 12-point but was reduced to an 11-point plan—but the point is they will not do what really matters, and that is listen to the community and remove detention as a last resort.

This government weakened the laws. This government has failed to listen to the people who have put forward the solutions. If you have a look at every one of those 10-point, five-point, four-point and three-point plans, there is a consistent theme amongst all of them, and that is that announcements were made and the follow-through and the success of those programs have not been what was promised.

Labor increased penalties for stealing cars from seven years to 10 years. They did not change the sentencing cap, so increased penalties cannot be imposed. Previously, Labor increased a more severe penalty of 14 years if an offence is committed at night, if the offender uses violence or is armed. A recent question on notice shows that only three young offenders have been sentenced in a higher court. Two got 12 months and one got five months. Previously Labor said GPS trackers were a solution. As of 30 November 2023, only five were fitted.

This is a government that is big on announcements but very small when it comes to follow-through. What we have seen today is a government that will not own the problem it created. For the Premier to say he does not want to revisit that decision when Queenslanders are living that decision in their homes and in their businesses, every single day in every part of this state, it shows a government that does not listen and does not care—a government that lacks the ability to follow through, a government that lacks the compassion to do better for the community.

If the government changes in October, the Making Queensland Safer Laws will be law by the end of the year. At the centrepiece of the Making Queensland Safer Laws will be the removal of detention as a last resort. The provision that this government changed nine years ago created a generation of untouchables, a generation that is laughing at the law. It has created a generation of people who wear blue uniforms leaving quicker than they can be replaced because they do not have a government that has their back, and the Making Queensland Safer Laws will change that.

The Making Queensland Safer Laws will make sure that victims' rights count for something again. Victims' rights will matter and victims will have a voice again. It will be part of a suite of proposals that will deal with the problem at both ends of the spectrum. What is happening in early intervention in Queensland is not working and at the other end of the scale the repeat hardcore offenders get more repetitive and more hardcore every day. The only way this will change is if government changes because this government does not have their heart in this plan or in the last five plans of the last half a decade. This is a bad government, this is a government that is weak on law and order and this is a government that must be shown the door in 2024.

(Time expired)