




Speech By
Donna Kirkland

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 11 December 2024

MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Mrs KIRKLAND** (Rockhampton—LNP) (10.40 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024. Today I stand to represent the voices of Central Queensland, in particular the communities of Rockhampton and Gracemere. I have heard loud and clear their call to government for restoration of consequences for actions and to bring assurance that through adequate sentencing, perpetrators of crime will be dissuaded from repeat offending.

For over 400 days I have immersed myself in connecting with members of my community: doorknocking, phone canvassing, holding pop-up offices and attending myriad community events. The question I asked was, 'What is your No. 1 concern? What do you want the government to change?' The answer was, 'Do something about crime and make our community safer.' I have heard from residents of all ages who are fearful for their safety. They lock themselves in their homes like prisoners for their own safety. Seniors, often living on their own, would rather close all of the windows and put a dowel across the window sill than allow the cool breeze to flow through their home and bring relief from the stifling heat of Central Queensland. This measure alone carries risks, for example, in the event of a fire.

The continued escalation of anxiety being experienced across our community is further contributing to the decline in mental health and increased demands on health services. I have residents like Nicole, whose burly teenage son had to seek mental health treatment due to the fear created subsequent to a home invasion when the police said in front of him, 'Because they've got your keys now, they'll probably be back.' Then there was Chris, who after chasing and catching a perpetrator, watched on as the perpetrator walked away from court having had over 80 previous charges against him. Then there was Brad, who watched helplessly from work as his CCTV alert showed five masked perpetrators enter his home early in the morning while his wife was asleep and his daughter was in the shower. He was powerless to stop this invasion, which has haunted them. It has brought strain on the family and the business as once was not enough for these perpetrators; they came back a few months later.

It is not just residential properties falling victim to these repeat serious offenders; it is also our local business owners. I speak of business owners like Vishal, a motor vehicle repairer who has endured five acts of crime against his business in the last 12 months. This has resulted in over \$250,000 in damages as well as a decline in business due to customers now not feeling safe to entrust their vehicles to him. There have also been impacts to his staff and to add final insult, due to the repeated claims, Vishal's business no longer qualifies for insurance against this continued assault on his business by the would-be offenders. In fact, Vishal's business was again the subject of damages just two days ago. Vishal's frustration at viewing the CCTV footage over and over—the same faces, the same repeat offenders—cannot be measured. At the same time he watches the business he has fought so hard for struggle while there are no consequences for those who have caused his predicament.

Abandoned, damaged, stolen cars are strewn through our community with 'police aware' stickers across the smashed windscreens—windcreens of cars that are the owners' primary form of transport. They are now faced with days and sometimes weeks of replacing keys and cards. They also have to

find a new way to get to work to earn the money to pay for all of these new and unexpected expenses forced on them by the nonchalant thief, who has no care for the consequences they have brought upon the owner, nor do they have any fear of consequences from the law and justice system as it currently stands. They were laws that were watered down deliberately by the previous Palaszczuk-Miles Labor government. The existing laws have bred a generation of untouchables and they know it.

I am here to represent the voices of our business owners and residents alike who have voted for the Making Queensland Safer Laws. This bill will restore hope to my community—hope that the government of the day are willing to listen and to follow through on setting boundaries and establishing consequences for actions that reflect the community's expectations. I am proud to be a part of the Crisafulli-led government that have emphasised the importance of, and our commitment to, significant investment in early intervention and prevention initiatives that will turn the tide on youth crime, leading children away from a life of crime. I assure the member for Bancroft that we, in fact, do care for the young offender as well.

The communities of Rockhampton and Gracemere will host one of nine Regional Reset programs that will provide 24/7 intensive support for at-risk young people who require a higher level of care than community-based programs can provide. Rockhampton will also host one of our four crime prevention schools that will re-engage students who have fallen out of mainstream schooling and are assessed to be at a risk of falling into crime. I am also very pleased to support Circuit Breaker Sentencing, a three- to six-month court ordered rehabilitation program as an alternative to detention. Two programs can cater for up to 60 young people at any one time.

Data has revealed that youth offenders are offending more violently, with an 8.4 per cent increase in the violence of youth offenders and the number of repeat offenders on an average day having grown by 58 per cent. Our communities across Queensland, including Rockhampton and Gracemere, have voted for justice for victims and our Crisafulli-led LNP government will deliver. As promised, the Making Queensland Safer Bill was introduced in response to that call.

I appeal to the House to support these voices from our communities and the victims of crime, who are sick and tired of the damage being done to property and to lives. I commend the bill to the House.