




Speech By
Glen Kelly

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

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MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Mr G KELLY** (Mirani—LNP) (11.56 pm): I rise here today not only as the member for Mirani but as someone who deeply understands the heartache and frustration of the people I represent. The Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 demonstrates our government's unwavering commitment to deliver on our promises to Queenslanders in addressing the youth crime crisis that has plagued our state. Let me share the story of a family from Marian, which is a quiet, close-knit town of around 4,500 people just 30 kilometres west of Mackay. Marian is the kind of place where families move to escape the chaos of town life, seeking a sense of safety and community. It is a town where parents feel confident letting their kids ride bikes or walk to school, knowing they are part of a secure, supportive environment.

Just this week the sense of security was shattered. Local teenagers who are well known to authorities and repeatedly in and out of detention were released again on Thursday. By early Saturday morning they had broken into a home in Beaconsfield and stolen a car, Christmas presents and personal items. The car was later found burnt out. While the offenders were apprehended, they were released only to commit more crimes and were apprehended and released again. By 3 am on Monday these same offenders struck Marian. They broke into the home of one of my constituents, a young family with a two-year-old and a six-month-old. They stole both cars, wallets, Christmas presents including a pram, car seats and cash.

This family is now grappling with financial stress and trauma. They are sleeping together in one room, terrified that these criminals will return. To make matters worse, they have a terminally-ill parent in hospital whom they can no longer visit due to the loss of these vehicles. These offenders did not just steal possessions; they stole precious time with a loved one—time that can never be replaced. Their two-year-old witnessed these strangers in their home and is deeply traumatised, recounting details of the event that will take years to recover from. To add insult to injury, these offenders are brazenly showcasing their crimes on social media, glorifying their actions and encouraging others to do the same. This is not an isolated incident. It is a tragic example of what happens when the system fails to hold offenders accountable.

Under the previous Labor government, serious repeat youth offenders, like these ones terrorising my electorate, have avoided proper punishment and have been allowed to continue to terrorise our communities. Labor's so-called solution has allowed youth crime to spiral out of control. Since 2019, there has been an 8.3 per cent increase in the violence of youth offenders, and the number of serious repeat offenders has grown by 58 per cent.

Labor told Queenslanders that youth crime was decreasing, but the facts say otherwise. In the last financial year alone, there were 46,130 proven offences by young people, a 51 per cent increase over five years. These statistics represent thousands of Queenslanders whose lives have been disrupted by crime. This cannot go on, and it will not under this government.

The Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 delivers on our promise of Adult Crime, Adult Time. Juvenile offenders who commit serious crimes such as murder, manslaughter or grievous bodily harm will now face the same penalties as adults. These include mandatory life detention for murder with a non-parole period of 20 years.

This bill also removes the principle of detention as a last resort for serious youth offenders, refocusing on community safety as the highest priority. Courts will now consider an offender's full criminal history, including juvenile records, when sentencing adult offenders.

While tougher laws are necessary, they are only part of the solution. Our government is making significant investments in early intervention and rehabilitation programs to address the root causes of youth crime and provide young people with a chance to change course. These initiatives aim to prevent crime before it happens and ensure young people are given the tools to turn their lives around.

Queenslanders deserve to feel safe in their own homes, workplaces and communities. This bill is not just about penalties and sentencing; it is about restoring safety, trust and dignity to the people of Queensland.

Victims must also be at the heart of our justice system. For too long, families like the one in Marian have been treated as an afterthought. This bill changes that. The Youth Justice Act will be amended so that the courts must prioritise the impact of the child's offending on victims when determining sentences. An opt-out model will ensure victims and their families automatically remain updated on the offender's custody movements unless they choose otherwise.

This bill is not about giving victims their communities back; it is about ensuring that families who work hard and contribute so much are no longer left behind by a system that prioritises offenders over their safety. But beyond tougher sentencing and better victim support, this bill delivers something equally important. It is called hope—hope these families can reclaim the sense of safety they deserve; hope that offenders can be rehabilitated before they escalate into more serious crimes; hope that our communities can thrive again unburdened by constant fear of what might happen next.

Crime is not just a statistic; it is the disruption of lives, a shattering of trust and a shadow over our communities. These incidents are not just headlines; they are personal tragedies. They are a stark reminder that crime has consequences beyond the act itself. The comprehensive approach ensures we are not just responding to crime but preventing it.

The people of Mirani and all of Queensland have been let down for too long. They have seen promises come and go, but they have rarely seen action. This bill is about an opportunity to change that, and I am proud to be a part of the government that takes action.

To the people of Mirani, I stand here today in support of this bill as a voice for victims of crime. I stand with the families who have endured unimaginable pain, and I stand with the communities that are counting on us for leadership and decisive action. I am proud to stand with the Crisafulli government in sending a clear and unwavering message: crime will not be tolerated, victims will be supported and prioritised, and the communities we represent will once again be safe.