




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (9.56 pm): I rise to add to the debate on the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024. Queenslanders deserve to be safe and feel safe in their home, in their community and as they go about their daily lives in Queensland. The Labor opposition acknowledges that Queenslanders had their say during the general election and that the government is implementing its Adult Crime, Adult Time policy before Christmas. However, it is clear from reading the legislation and stakeholder feedback that this bill substantially goes beyond what was canvassed during the recent general election.

The government took a slogan to the election and produced a 52-page document that significantly changes the justice and the youth justice legislative landscape here in Queensland. The government has told Queenslanders it will reduce victim numbers, and Labor will hold it to that. The evidence shows us there is no silver bullet to addressing youth offending. Instead, a mixture of targeted prevention, of intervention and of detention is what is required.

The opposition were concerned from the first sitting day so we wrote to the responsible ministers in relation to the Queensland government's intention to introduce and pass the Making Queensland Safer Laws before the end of the year. The opposition noted that, during a leaders' debate during the election period, the leader of the LNP, and now Premier, indicated that the laws were drafted. The leader of the LNP said—

I've written the legislation. By the end of the year, it will be law.

While the government has a mandate to progress legislation, the LNP also committed during the election campaign to ensure the parliament's role in government oversight is strengthened so it is no longer used as a rubber stamp. Introducing this bill and ramming through another bill without going through a committee or public consultation in the first three hours of the first sitting day of this parliament is the biggest rubber stamp I have ever seen. If the now Premier had written the legislation, why did he hide it from full scrutiny by the Queensland public after the election, knowing that the earliest opportunity for the laws to be introduced in the Queensland parliament was Thursday, 28 November and also knowing that the government had indicated that the laws would be debated during the sitting week before Christmas? It only left one week for a portfolio committee to scrutinise in detail the proposed legislation before it.

To keep faith with the LNP's commitment to respect the parliamentary process and to ensure that stakeholders and Queenslanders had the ability to review and provide input into legislation, we asked the government to release the draft legislation to allow Queenslanders the ability to review and comment on it. This request was to ensure that Queenslanders had the best legislation considered and passed by the Queensland parliament. Due to the limited time afforded to this legislation within the parliamentary process, the Labor opposition also requested a briefing by relevant departmental officers regarding the proposed legislation prior to it being introduced in the Legislative Assembly.

The LNP have said that these laws will put a stop to youth crime. During the election the Premier quoted the ABS statistics and hedged his job on those stats. He said he would resign if victim numbers did not go down. However, it was revealed during the hearing by the director-general of the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support that the government is looking at how to count victim numbers. The transcript shows that the director-general stated—

I know that government will announce how it intends to count the number of victims in the near future. That is a matter for whole-of-government consideration.

The statistics which Premier David Crisafulli quoted during the election are used by the ABS to analyse victim rates state by state and we will hold the Premier and the LNP to account for their promises based on that data. Despite their slick slogans, it is clear the LNP already want to change the way that data is counted—to cook the books—so they cannot be held accountable if these laws do not work. This is straight out of Campbell Newman's playbook. It is just like when he stopped the publication of the QPS annual statistics—that is right, stopping the publication of detailed crime data in Queensland and hiding it from Queenslanders.

What did we do when we won the election in 2015? We set up the Government Statistician's Office—an independent office tasked with reporting this important data—because we believe in transparency. We want all Queenslanders to feel safe. That is why we invested so significantly in community safety and introduced tougher laws led by evidence. Our Queensland community safety bill—part of our community safety plan—was backed with \$1.28 billion in investment. That is right: we backed our law changes with the investment that was needed to make them work. Those on the front line told us that is what they needed and we listened to them. Our plan was working, with police telling us there was a downward trend in offending.

The LNP bill is not accompanied by a single dollar for our police, youth justice workers, corrections workers and the courts. There is no investment in detention capacity. The LNP have said that this bill will lead to more people in custody. Where is the investment from those opposite in additional custodial capacity? When they were last in government they did not build any watch houses or any youth detention centres. They point to the new remand centre at Wacol as a potential solution. We initiated that project to address existing demand in our watch houses, not the new demand that the government has admitted will come from the new laws we are debating over the next couple of days. There is no investment and no implementation plan for any of the proposals they put forward.

This is opposed by the Bar Association, the Queensland Law Society and leading academic and faith groups. This is typical of the LNP. They think they know what is best for everyone, even the experts.

We have proposed sensible amendments with one aim in mind: to strengthen community safety. They will not listen because they would rather rush through the laws that will not work and then admit that there is room for improvement later. Do members know who we have not heard from throughout this whole process? We have not heard from the Queensland Police Service—the people responsible for executing these laws and bringing the offenders before the courts.

The Premier and police minister need to come clean with what advice they have received from the police. Did the police say, 'Yep, no worries, we can do all this additional work and handle the additional capacity with no extra resources' or did they ask for support and the LNP said, 'No, you must buy your own equipment like you did last time we were in government.'

We all want Queenslanders to feel safe, but the LNP's approach is fundamentally flawed. There is no investment in police, no extra court resources, no extra additional custodial capacity and no real intention from the LNP to make the community safer with funding to support our frontline services. When the laws do not reduce victim numbers, the LNP have already asked the public servants to find a different way of reporting the data.

Queenslanders are smart enough to see through the LNP's slick slogans and sneaky tricks and we will work every single day to hold this government to account. These are serious issues that need to be addressed for both our police and our corrective services to ensure they have the work environment that is safe for them and they have the tools and funding required to maintain order in Queensland.

Our amendments are sensible and still allow the government to implement their Adult Crime, Adult Time policy before Christmas and give the parliament the opportunity to scrutinise the rest of the bill the way it should be.