




Speech By  
**James Lister**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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**MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (11.11 pm): I rise to make a contribution in this debate on the Making Queensland Safer Bill on behalf of the long-suffering people of Southern Downs who have, more than most in Queensland, been impacted by the rampant youth crime that we have seen over the last decade. One thing I know for certain is that the people of Queensland have an expectation that the order of precedence in terms of justice in the community is that law-abiding citizens come first and then, well below that, perpetrators. All of this debate and the election campaign that has just come and gone has centred around whether or not the people of Queensland should be allowed to have that currently inverted order of precedence where offenders are kowtowed to and hands are wrung over their welfare and communities are left to fend for themselves and victims continue to mount up.

This bill is the culmination of the campaign that the Liberal National Party under David Crisafulli took to the election. It was a clear promise to the people of Queensland that before Christmas came the Making Queensland Safer Laws would be brought before parliament and passed. When I saw the shenanigans that occurred earlier tonight, whereupon the opposition in this state attempted to delay proceedings and to grandstand, I thought that was a great discourtesy to the people of Queensland and an even greater affront to the victims of crime. I can certainly speak for the electors in Southern Downs who have experienced much of that.

The type of crime we are talking about that is typical in Goondiwindi, Millmerran, Warwick, Texas, Inglewood and Killarney involves offenders who are becoming increasingly violent and brazen and who want to steal cars. They will identify a car they like in the motel car park, they will kick the door down and, because of a lack of consequence over many years, the youth offenders, and the older ones who were youth offenders during the period of backsliding that we have seen over the last decade, will go into the hotel room and pre-emptively clobber the occupants to subdue them in order to get their car keys. We are talking about people who break into people's homes with no concern for the fact that there are people inside, with the intent to brutalise them and to get car keys. We are talking about people who have lost their cars once, twice, three or four times. If you are a tradie and you lose your ute and all of your tools and equipment because the ute is burnt or pushed into the Macintyre River, that has a massive impact on you. If you are the operator of a motel and there is an invasion, that hurts your business, it hurts the reputation of your business. That room may not be able to be rented out for months. If you are the operator of a small business like a supermarket or a corner store and your premises are ramraided with a stolen vehicle over and over again, each time \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000 worth of damage can be done in order for the offenders to steal lollies and cigarettes. People are traumatised and they are fearful. I wrote to the previous government to make it very clear that many of my electors sleep with clubs and firearms at the ready because they are concerned about their home being invaded. They are concerned about the absence of restraint and proportion and any sense of respect for themselves or for the community on the part of the perpetrators who have had it too good for too long.

These laws are very important to my community and to all Queenslanders. I believe that those who disagree with these laws sincerely believe that the answer does not lie in locking up offenders. I am afraid the horse has bolted on that. We have had a decade of youth offenders being allowed to run amok. Some of them are adult offenders now. I have heard members on the other side of the House say that these offenders have disabilities, mental health problems, fetal alcohol syndrome, they have not gone to school and so forth. Part of the reason for those things is the fact that they have been allowed to stay with unfit parents. I believe that there were failures on the part of the Labor government. Because of political expediency or a philosophical commitment to leaving kids with their parents if at all possible, those children have experienced a disservice and their drift into a life of crime, where they have not attended school or where they have been traumatised, has then meant that they are committed to that life path now. I believe that many of the perpetrators may never be rehabilitated. We believe we should start immediately with the very effective early intervention strategies that we went to the election on and that are proposed here.

Those who argue that locking up offenders is not the answer are forgetting that a decade of going soft on crime has resulted in perpetrators who do not care and whenever they are at liberty they steal cars, invade homes, assault people, ramraid shops, run amok and in some cases the outcome is tragic. Anybody who says that this is not the way to go is saying that the community, the good law-abiding people of Queensland, should simply tolerate the crime until the social policies, which we hear should fix the problem, take effect. That is just not on. The people of Goondiwindi, Millmerran, Warwick, Stanthorpe, Killarney, Inglewood and Texas are entitled to sleep safe in their beds at night. If the way to achieve that is to lock up a recidivist offender so they cannot reoffend every night then that is what we must do. Anybody who says that this is an excessively punitive approach and that it is grandstanding—which I think I heard the member for Maiwar say—is fatally disconnected from the word on the street in places like Goondiwindi.

**Mr McDonald** interjected.

**Mr LISTER:** I take that acknowledgement from my honourable friend, the member for Lockyer, a distinguished police officer before he entered parliament and a representative of a community which too has been touched by this crime. In order to satisfy the people of Queensland that the justice system works and that they are safe, we need to make changes now. There is a clear mandate from the people of Queensland to do so. Early intervention may take a long time to start bearing fruit but we will start immediately. We will make sure that there are consequences for actions and that those who perpetrate crimes lose their liberty if necessary in order to prevent that crime being committed over and over and over again.

I am weary of hearing about experts and expert advice. I think the Premier made a very pithy point last week when he pointed out that those same experts are the kinds of people who advocated for the watering down of youth justice laws in the first place. I am tired of hearing experts who live away from Goondiwindi saying that the people of Goondiwindi should be condemned to ongoing crime in order that the perpetrators, whom they view as victims, can have a free rein. That is not on.

Who is the Labor Party kidding? I encourage anyone who disagrees with what I have said to doorknock my electorate and tell people what a rogue and a heartless reactionary I am because I support these laws as that would very much help me at the next election. I think the Labor Party need to confront the fact that they are disconnected from what people really want and they are disconnected from what the community expects. Their approach to youth justice was the genesis of the problem we have now and it has been discredited. For 10 years the experts had been saying that what the Labor Party was doing was what they wanted, but they were wrong and the Labor Party was wrong. The people of Queensland are right. The people of Goondiwindi and other places in my electorate and throughout Queensland are entitled to a government that listens and regards their safety as being more important than the interests of offenders.