




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

Record of Proceedings, 10 December 2024

MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (10.34 pm): The most primary human need that we all have is to feel safe. We are, in fact, biologically hardwired to seek out the conditions that make us feel safe. People in my electorate share those needs, and we are also not immune to crime; we have had our fair share of break-ins and cars stolen. There are people who have been impacted directly or who have witnessed graphic home invasions on social media and people feel scared. Community safety was absolutely a feature in this election. If this bill was offering a credible solution towards improving community safety, I would have no problem at all standing here and supporting it today, but the reality is that this bill, despite its slogan headline, will ultimately lead to a very violent state here in Queensland and it will set us apart as one of the greatest violators of human rights and, most egregiously, will remove options and rights for victims of violent crime.

This bill includes mandatory sentencing, it removes detention as a last resort and may result in children as young as 10 being sentenced to life sentences. I get that it is intuitive to say, 'Well, perhaps they will think about that next time they jump into the back of a stolen car,' but anyone who has worked with these young people, anyone in this room who is a parent of a teenager, knows that that approach just does not work. It is not how they work. These measures will harm young people who will then come out and harm others. They will harm people in my community, and that is intolerable to me.

I note the brief opportunity of just two business days that stakeholders had to provide input to the committee on this bill. The committee received over 175 submissions, and the overwhelming majority of those submissions completely and comprehensively repudiated this bill. I want to acknowledge particularly the victims who made submissions and who raised substantial concerns about this bill—victims who have experienced youth crime firsthand and who are now urging the government to be brave enough to concede that perhaps they have not got it right and to go back and work with the experts and to work with victims to design and deliver a policy that fulfils the government's promise to reduce victim numbers.

I am a victim of violent crime and, importantly, I have spent 25 years listening to victims. Despite a range of views, we are unanimous on one thing: we do not want anyone to ever have to go through what we have experienced—identifying bodies, death knocks, media inquiries, funerals and court cases. When you live through an experience like this, you realise that this is not an issue to be used for political gain or expedience; that we in this place have a shared responsibility to keep Queenslanders safe.

Prisons are criminogenic. This is not an opinion or a hypothetical; it is something that has been proven across every comparable jurisdiction for decades. We also know that prisons do not deter young people, or adults for that matter, from committing a crime. It is not a subjective theory. This, too, has been well evidenced in many places, including Queensland. That is why Texas, which has the death penalty for murder, still has one of the highest murder rates in the world. So, while I appreciate the

intuitive notion that locking more children up for longer periods will somehow make our homes safer, what we know is that when we remove children and young people from their home, when you take them away from people who care about them, when you take them away from their supports, when you take them away from their treatment, when you take them away from their education and you imbed them into a family and a network of peers who are also extraordinarily violent and isolated and angry, what you do—

Ms Camm interjected.

Ms BUSH: The member would know this as the minister—is create a cohort of young people who are traumatised and violent and resistant to rehabilitation.

Ms Camm interjected.

Ms BUSH: The minister has some serious questions to answer this week in parliament. What will be the impact on watch houses? Where are these young people going to be held? Any given night there are around 280 children in prison. The Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council data indicates that a further 2,200 children will be affected by this bill.

Conservatively, if even a quarter of those children are wrapped up into custodial sentences, you are looking at an additional 500 children sitting in prisons. How many more youth detention facilities need to be built, and in which communities will the minister place them? Queenslanders have a right to know that. Queenslanders also have the right to know what it will cost and whether that funding would be better allocated upstream into mental health supports, rehabilitation beds and family supports.

During the election campaign, the Premier spoke about gold standard early intervention. I would love the minister to take me to the clause in this bill that speaks to that, because there is no mention of that in this bill. The Premier spoke about 12-month transition plans for young people. It might be there, but I cannot see where that is in that bill. They have not explained whether that will carry over into an adult corrections facility, where most of these young people will be exiting from under this bill. The Premier said that this bill would put victims first. Can the minister then explain why there are clauses in this bill that will cut restorative justice options for victims of crime to meet with their offender, to seek an apology and to seek recompense?

This bill is about giving a voice to victims, so I will highlight a couple of the submissions from victims groups—groups that are working with thousands of victims in this state and that raised significant concerns. The Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group, while supporting the intent of the bill, raised numerous concerns about the bill including the likelihood that victims will be cross-examined. They said that victims have had a lifetime of governments 'doing things to them' and that rushed legislation like this is triggering and leads to distrust. Ending Violence Against Women asked the government to reconsider its position on removing youth justice conferencing as an option for victims of a youth offender. Queer & Trans Workers Against Violence urged the government to draw from the range of experts and asked the government to explain how this bill will actually deliver on the promise to keep Queenslanders safe.

Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma labelled this bill discriminatory and based on race. They said it would not make Queensland safer. They asked the minister what rehabilitation programs will be put in place in prisons. The Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence asked why the bill ignores best practice and the views of experts. The Independent Ministerial Advisory Council, which was established to advance the rights and interests of victims of crime, said that the fast-tracked nature of this bill has not allowed for proper consideration and advocated that the government reconsider the removal of restorative justice for victims of crime in Queensland. Beck O'Connor, the Victims' Commissioner, said that measures in this bill were unprecedented and submitted that there needs to be a review period put into this bill.

This week many of us have been at graduation ceremonies with young students and school leaders who are literally in the age range of this bill, 10- to 17-year-olds. When I speak to young leaders, I talk about integrity. I tell them that integrity is about doing the right thing when no-one is watching, but sometimes integrity is about doing the right thing when everybody is watching. It is about values. It is having the integrity to acknowledge when you do not quite have it right and it is about respecting the power and privilege entrusted to each of us with respect and decency. This bill represents a significant departure from the evidence of what works in criminal justice. This bill will result in more violence, more victims and more harm. I urge all members in this House to think about that this week as they cast their vote.