




Speech By
Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2024

QUEENSLAND FOOD FARMERS' COMMISSIONER BILL; CROSS-BORDER COMMISSIONER BILL; NIGHT-LIFE ECONOMY COMMISSIONER BILL

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (7.32 pm): I rise to make a contribution to this unprecedented commissioners cognate debate, and it is unprecedented for a few reasons. It is unprecedented because we are only being given 40 minutes to debate three bills that have been cognated together, it is unprecedented because the minister has announced who the Cross-Border Commissioner will be before the bill has even been passed in parliament, and it is unprecedented because there has been no consultation on any of these bills. However, I want it on the record in this House that since March 2020—since the day I was elected—I have fought tooth and nail for Queensland's own cross-border commissioner. As a proud representative of a cross-border community, I have fought for a cross-border commissioner, and never was that more important than during the border closures of 2020.

Even before that, a cross-border commissioner was the LNP's policy in 2017. We took that to the 2017 election, so for nearly a decade the LNP has been advocating for a cross-border commissioner for our border communities. Did the state Labor government listen or act for almost a decade? No, it did not, but now, on the eve of an election, it is announcing that it is implementing a cross-border commissioner. However, the Premier is trying to make out that this is the solution to the youth crime crisis that this Labor government has seen explode under its watch. He is trying to make out that a cross-border commissioner is his solution. The reason these youths are crossing the border and terrorising communities like Goondiwindi and like my border community of Coolangatta is that they know that our laws in Queensland are too weak to hold them. They know that in Queensland they are untouchable. They know that detention is a last resort in Queensland. So, yes, a cross-border commissioner is something the LNP has been calling for for almost a decade; however, it is not the solution to the youth crime crisis. The solution to the youth crime crisis is to change the laws. The solution to the youth crime crisis—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Member, I have given you some latitude. I appreciate the point you were making. You have now moved into another area where you are pursuing another line that does not relate to the long title of these bills. I would ask you to come back to the substance of the debate.

Mrs GERBER: Certainly, Mr Deputy Speaker. Time and time again my community called for a cross-border commissioner to navigate the issues that border communities face, but time and time again for almost a decade the Labor government failed to do it, and I want to take this House to a specific instance of that. When my community was suffering through border restrictions and closures, I wrote to the Premier, I made a number of speeches in parliament and I asked questions on notice. I specifically said to take politics out of it and appoint a bipartisan cross-border commissioner to develop a workable cross-border solution for our community. What do members think the Premier's answer to that question was? At the time the then premier of Queensland said that Queensland was without the need for that specific additional officer, yet now on the eve of an election we see Premier Miles announcing a cross-border commissioner.

I also note that the government has announced that the President of the Queensland Police Union, Ian Leavers, will take up the position as Queensland's Cross-Border Commissioner. In the past I note that Ian Leavers has given support to our police getting more powers to keep our cross-border communities safe. In fact, when the LNP announced Adult Crime, Adult Time as a policy, Ian Leavers went on 4BC and talked about how our border communities and our Queensland communities need more police to enforce Adult Crime, Adult Time. Mr Leavers was also one of the first to call this government out for the youth crime epidemic that was ripping through this state. Mr Leavers also said that the current youth justice and bail laws were hindering police cracking down on youth offenders and he also publicly supported opening the Childrens Court to victims and the media.

I hope Mr Leavers continues to support more police for our border communities and I hope he continues to support the laws that our police and our communities need to keep our border communities safe as the newly appointed Cross-Border Commissioner—even though this bill has not yet passed through the parliament—because the safety of border communities should be a priority for this government. If this Labor government were prioritising the safety of our border communities then it would have given our community a cross-border commissioner almost a decade ago when the LNP was calling for it, but no. It does it on the eve of an election because it is trying to secure votes and because it is not serious. This Cross-Border Commissioner is not the solution to the youth crime crisis that the Premier claims it is. The solution to that is to change our laws.

(Time expired)