




Speech By
Hon. Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Hon. LJ GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services) (9.26 pm): On 26 October 2024 Queenslanders voted for change, they voted for a fresh start, they voted for safety in their homes, they voted for safety in their businesses, they voted for safety at their local shopping centres and they voted overwhelmingly for safety in their communities. At the outset I want to acknowledge all of the brave victims of crime who stood up and told their story in the hope for change, in the hope for stronger laws, in the hope that no-one else will have to suffer through what they have suffered through. These laws are for all of those victims because, after a decade of the former Labor government, which weakened our youth justice laws and eroded the rights of victims, our proposed strong laws in this bill have never been more vital.

To people such as Russell Field, Capalaba's newest LNP member of parliament, whose tragic loss at the hands of a youth criminal we sadly all know too well; to Natalie Merlehan, who was also hit by the youth criminal who killed Matthew, Kate and baby Miles and who desperately tried to save the Field family while suffering her own injuries; to Cindy Micallef and Victor White, whose tragic loss of their mum and wife, Vyleen White, we also know sadly too well; to Michelle Liddle and Ben Beaumont, whose 15-year-old son, Angus Beaumont, was stabbed to death by two teenagers with violent criminal histories; to Lee Lovell and his daughters, whose wife and mum, Emma Lovell, was brutally killed by a youth; to Chris Sanders, who was assaulted, stabbed and left lying in his own blood by youth offenders in a shopping centre; to Leanne Barsby, who was the victim of a violent and armed home invasion where a 14-year-old punched her in the chest and head, leaving her with seizures; to Ben Cannon alongside Lyndy Atkinson, Trudy Reading, Helen Duck and George Atkinson, who galvanised as Voice for Victims to support victims of crime across Queensland; and to all of the brave victims of crime: I want you to know that the Crisafulli government has heard you, we see your pain, we see your advocacy and we will give you the laws you have called for and the support you need.

Adult Crime, Adult Time will be law before Christmas. We on this side of the House are delivering consequences for action. Adult Crime, Adult Time means youth offenders who commit the most serious offences like murder, manslaughter, grievous bodily harm, dangerous operation of a motor vehicle, robbery and burglaries and serious assault will be liable to the same maximum, minimum and mandatory penalties as adults who are convicted for the same serious violent offences. Adult Crime, Adult Time will give the courts the laws they need to hand down consequences for action. Under the LNP's laws, Labor's generation of hardcore repeat youth offenders will no longer be untouchable. They will be held to account and victims will be safer.

These laws are the first step in our Crisafulli government's plan to make our community safer. It will deliver on our commitment to hold youth offenders to account and put the rights of victims before the rights of offenders. Our laws will require courts to have primary regard to the impact on the victim of the crime. This will no longer just be one of the over a dozen factors that a judge weighs up in determining the appropriate sentence to hand down, it will mean that the impact of the crime on the victim will be primary when a judge is considering what is the appropriate sentence.

Our laws will amend section 150 of the Youth Justice Act to ensure victim participation in the youth justice system is valued and respected. Our laws will open the Childrens Court to victims and their families and to the media. Our laws will allow the court to review the full criminal history of offenders when sentencing, including a juvenile's record for up to five years after the outcome for the last childhood offence. Our laws will make it easier for victims of crime to be updated about a case by changing to an opt-out system for victims to receive updates. Importantly, all of these were put to the people of Queensland before the election and they overwhelmingly voted for these laws to be law by Christmas. After a decade of the former Labor government systematically watering down our Youth Justice Act, of them refusing to listen to victims of crime, this bill has never been more important. There were 289,657 victims of crime in the last financial year that those opposite were in government. We know that is a record those opposite do not want to talk about and we know that that is a 14 per cent increase on the victims of crime in the previous financial year that those opposite were in government.

Under a Crisafulli-led government there will be fewer victims of crime. This bill is just the first step in strengthening the rights of victims. The plan for this bill is to help establish the professional victims' advocate service. It will be a one-stop shop for victims of crime to help them navigate the justice system and provide them with end-to-end support throughout the justice process.

I am so proud to be part of a Crisafulli LNP government that is putting the rights of victims at the heart of our justice system, giving them the respect and the support they deserve. How did the previous Labor government treat victims of crime when it was in government? The former Labor member for Capalaba called the youth crime crisis a media beat-up, while the former Labor member for Thuringowa described victims of crime in Townsville as a rent-a-crowd. Where are those members now? Their community overwhelmingly rejected them. I welcome the LNP member for Thuringowa who gives a voice to victims and stands up for her community and the LNP member for Capalaba who is the reason these laws are here. What he and his family have been through, his advocacy for these laws, is a testament to the rights of victims and what victims need in the system. One only has to look at some of the submissions to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee in Townsville to see how much those communities need these laws. Jillian Joyce told the committee—

I am an Army veteran with over 13 years service. I am no longer in the army but I deployed both domestically and on short notice to overseas operations in hostile and conflict environments. I can tell you, with confidence, that I am feeling more unsafe in my home at night than I ever did when I deployed to riots in Solomon Islands. This is not fair. This is not right.

Jillian is right. It is not fair and it is not right. It is a damning indictment on the former Labor government and it is why these laws must be law by Christmas. Not only are we determined to give Queenslanders the laws they need to keep our communities safe, but our Community Safety Plan also means we will intervene, we will rehabilitate and we will provide gold standard early intervention to at-risk youth. Our Making Queensland Safer Laws go hand in hand with our \$485 million additional investment in early intervention and preventive initiatives: Staying on Track, Circuit Breaker Sentencing, gold standard early intervention, nine regional reset camps, \$40 million for two new youth justice schools and \$40 million for four crime prevention schools. This is our comprehensive plan to deal with the youth crime crisis that those opposite started and continue to deny with their contributions to this debate. The Making Queensland Safer Laws that we took to the election, that Queenslanders overwhelmingly backed, that Queenslanders overwhelmingly called for, are the laws that will keep our communities safe. This is the first critical step to returning safety to where you live in our Queensland communities.