




Speech By
Linus Power

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (11.41 am): This Labor opposition 100 per cent backs the actions that we need to make Queensland safer. We rightfully feel genuine anger at those who hurt other Queenslanders. We stand on the side of those Queenslanders who have been hurt. We know that this legislation will pass tonight. We know that it would be improved and accountability would be improved if the member for Gaven's amendments were also passed.

Representing Logan, I stand with those who suffer injury or live with the trauma and fear of their house being broken into, their car being stolen or physical injury being done to them. It feels like a particular betrayal when a child I saw a few years ago at a primary school graduation ceremony becomes someone who causes that fear, uncertainty, hurt and trauma in our community. I know this fear is real. I have stood with and been with those who have had to confront these people on their own threshold.

I was particularly moved by residents in one street whom I have spoken about with friends here, where a young teenager had to be confronted not once but twice over three nights in Regents Park. We on the Labor side know that Queenslanders should never have to feel that fear that those in this street in Regents Park felt for months after those two nights. I want to recognise the great work our Queensland police do especially in Logan. I want to recognise the officers of Browns Plains, Jimboomba and Yarrabilba police districts. I back them in the job they do and will push for greater resources for policing our growing area.

We recognise that Queenslanders supported the slogans the LNP put forward with Adult Crime, Adult Time. I know in my community that the hundreds of corflutes on the streets were met with a clear sentiment of 'Well, yes, we do need to do something.' I back Logan residents who want to prevent crime—100 per cent. That is why I need to be, as their representative, someone who looks really carefully into the detail of the legislation to get the real results we want.

Logan people know that longer sentences mean that these youth offenders will be prevented from causing fear and crime at least while they are serving their sentences. They know though that this is no substitute for preventing crime in the first place. They also know that eventually these children are released as young adults or as older children and that their incarceration may not stop them committing crimes and creating fear in the future. They get it because they have Logan common sense. They know that this might have a temporary effect, but then those young angry adults are released. That is why they want to get this right and they know it is only part of the solution. That is why they know that prevention of a crime ever happening is the real answer the community is looking for.

People who work in youth crime prevention or youth courts or spend a lifetime examining policy are often derided. The word 'expert' is thrown around by some over there as an insult. These are genuine people who have seen those hurt by crime face-to-face. They get the profound pain and they devote their careers to preventing crime. To laughingly dismiss these experts is to do a disservice not just to these genuine people who want to help prevent future crime but also to those victims who have already been hurt by crime.

I know the one thing that unites victims of crime is a desire that no other Queenslanders should have to feel as they do now. They feel a desire for consequences and incarceration, but most of all they want others not to have to feel the pain that they have. That is why I am on their side. That is why we have a duty to get these laws right. I saw during the debate that these laws were drawn up months ago. That is what the Premier told us in the debate. I cannot for the life of me understand why they were not released then or, at a minimum, just after the election. I am particularly disappointed that in the scant two hearings we could not hear from the police. Their insight into the administration of these laws on the ground would have been really valuable. Why were they stopped? Why?

We know that the representatives of serving police officers, the Queensland Police Union, had significant concerns over the capacity of holding offenders in watch houses. I am not confident, given the rushed and unconsultative nature of this process, that the QPU's legitimate concerns have been thought through. I hope members have read the submissions that have significant and legitimate concerns about the detail of the laws and the rushed nature.

I have spoken to Logan residents who have gone through the restorative justice process. I saw that Natalie Merlehan from the group Voice for Victims asked that restorative justice not be removed. She said—

... if the rights of victims are to be considered as 'front and centre' the choice to undertake restorative justice, where suitable should be allowed to be considered through the appropriate channels and as a part of a healing journey for the victim and a willing perpetrator.

As an aside, I would like to say that I was very moved by Natalie's submission. Her support and her concerns are equally valid, and both deserve proper consideration in this House. The group Thrive and Connect said—

Young people caught in these cycles are not broken. They are often frightened, vulnerable children navigating lives marked by trauma, rejection, and adversity—

While I get that and we know it is true, we must also recognise that so many children—in fact, most—who face terrible childhoods do not want to hurt others as they have been hurt. However, we cannot run away from the fact that when we meet these children who inflict criminal pain on others, they overwhelmingly are not our children. I mean that they overwhelmingly do not come from stable, working households where they experience stability, certainty, consistency and a feeling of love. Legal Aid said—

... children in the criminal justice system are frequently the victims of crime themselves—
and that they also face—

... poverty and homelessness, family violence, mental health and disability ... and drug and alcohol dependency.

These are simply facts. We all know and concede them. These are not the circumstances that our children face. We often are not doing this to our children. It is a hard fact. It may be true that these laws apply equally to any child, but we have to face the reality that they will apply disproportionately to children who did not choose the dysfunctional, unloving, abusive, uncaring family they grew up with. We know that so many children facing adversity do make personal change to avoid hurting others. They are often influenced by a coach, leader or friend. We need to back those children who make that change.

Can I tell the House a story about a young kid who grew up just off Compton Road, streets away from where I bought my first house and we were living with my kids when they were toddlers. He was a skinny young kid who was pretty good at footy. He grew up and, during his teenage years, he broke into cars and sheds and stole lawnmowers to sell. These acts are terrible and his life could have gone in a very bad way. The laws put forward here suggest that he would face maximums of 14 years, 10 years and 10 years for those actions. The question is: how long would the government like him to spend in jail? Their suggestion is to have those adult sentences and for it to be 10 years, 10 years and 14 years.

I get that. I understand that he has done the wrong thing, but I also understand that a young person can turn their life around. He was a young teen and still really a child. He was supported by his caring parents and he made a commitment to change and a commitment to footy. I am inspired by him, by his change and redemption. That might seem soft, but he is someone we all know. We know his name so well that we use only his initials. This is the story that JT bravely shared with the Queensland public to talk about redemption and change. Would his life have been better facing 10 years, 10 years and 14 years?

I am inspired by JT—Johnathan Thurston—and especially inspired that he publicly shared that story. It is not just for his footy playing. I feel honoured to have met him and spoken to him about his commitment to changing young people. How do we make more JTs—little people on the wrong path who pull themselves up, lift themselves onto a different path? JT, in his way, is one of those experts—a lived experience of sliding doors, of opportunity taken and a wrong path rejected.

The bill in and of itself does not have any focus on helping to rehabilitate and lift future JT's from one path to another. I understand that there will be future announcements in this legislation in an attempt to do this, and I urge the government to show at least a modicum of respect to victims to not do this in a way with no consultation or committee process. I also ask them not to be so disrespectful that they disparage experts they might not agree with but who see a different path to a safer Queensland. I am on the side of those who are hurt by crime in Logan. I am on the side of those who are fearful of crime in Logan. That is why we must listen to those who devote all their ideas and lived experience to reducing crime and putting young people onto the right path.

We have to accept that we can make change in young people's lives, and that punitive punishments that further exacerbate the trauma young people face and that ultimately release them into a world that they think is completely uncaring are not the full answer to this issue. I know it is popular—I know it is easy to put on a corflute; I saw hundreds of them—but that does not mean we cannot critically examine these laws and give different perspectives. These laws will pass today. I hope they make Queensland safer, but there is so much more to do.