




Speech By
Martin Hunt

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

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MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Mr HUNT** (Nicklin—LNP) (9.47 pm): It is great to be back in the 58th Parliament. As I was saying before I was interrupted, I am humbled to be back representing the good people of Nicklin, and that is due to the support of the people of Nicklin who voted for change. They voted for a fresh start. They voted for a Crisafulli LNP government that listened and is acting on the youth crime crisis.

I am back after another four years of proudly serving again as a Queensland police officer. I was working with great men and women who, for a decade now, have been swimming valiantly against the tide of the former Labor government that weakened laws, stopped listening to victims and created this youth crime crisis. It is a profession that I am proud to say my own daughter has joined. These laws will finally help the police in their pursuit of the protection of the people of Queensland. Under the former Labor government, the Queensland Police Service saw attrition rates at record levels as frustrated officers could not take it anymore. They were frustrated at Labor's watered down youth justice laws that saw young offenders laughing at and taunting police officers daily. I saw many colleagues reach a point of frustration that saw them leave a job they loved due to weak laws and the weak former Labor government of the past decade. It was a government that did not have their backs.

I know that if the LNP did not win the recent election we would have lost many more. Many officers were just hanging on for a change and the Crisafulli government is leading that change. I join this 58th Parliament with five other former police officers on our side of the House—members with collectively over 168 years of policing experience, motivated to run for parliament after witnessing the years of Labor failure. That is 168 years of drowning in the tears and frustrations of victims of crime who have experienced terror, personal tragedy and injustice.

Policing is a unique profession where one is confronted daily by those who have been victims and those who have chosen to inflict injury and fear in the community. Police officers are confronted by victims of crime who have seen injustice due to the weakening of the youth crime laws. This weakening, over time, was proudly brought into this place by the former Labor government, who stopped listening to victims and instead turned their ears inwards into their ideological bubble and listened only to the advice that fit that ideology. That has brought us to where we are now.

Not only did their watered down laws not work; they created a youth crime disaster and a generation of untouchables that frustrated police have had to deal with in the revolving door system that saw the same recidivist offenders continually thumb their nose at a system that had no consequences and commit crime after crime, often whilst on bail. Over the last four years, back on the beat in the Queensland Police Service, I have had a front row seat to the youth crime crisis. Working first in general duties and then in the Child Protection and Investigation Unit, I have seen the frustration of the victims, the community and the police service.

Still, we come into this parliament with a clear message having been delivered by Queenslanders and Labor just do not have the heart to support all our strong laws, as indicated in their amendments. Their ideology is under threat and they cannot bring themselves to park their egos and realise they were wrong. They failed. They failed victims of crime. They failed victims' families. They failed the people of Queensland. They failed the Police Service. They failed the courts. They failed the children of this state.

The Making Queensland Safer Bill is the first step in turning around a completely broken system. I am proud to be part of a Crisafulli government that listens to the victims of crime and the community and takes action—a government that has the political will to listen to those who have been ignored and take caution in the advice of those who are responsible for the crisis we now find ourselves in.

I want to thank the members of the committee who worked hard to ensure Queenslanders would not go to Christmas without these laws in place. Ours is a government that delivers on what we said we would do. I thank the secretariat, whose professionalism and hard work helped the committee deliver this important report to the parliament. I want to thank particularly the members for Thuringowa, Townsville and Mundingburra. The Townsville area is ground zero for the youth crime crisis and I thank the local members for attending the committee hearings in Townsville last week where we heard harrowing stories from victims of crime and businesses terrorised as a result of the youth crime crisis.

Importantly, I want to thank the member for Capalaba for serving on our committee. We all heard this morning again about the tragedy that has brought him into this parliament and I thank him for serving on this important committee to make the changes that Queensland needs and Queenslanders voted for.

It is important to point out that these laws are for the most serious offences by the most serious offenders. These laws do not change police discretion, which they have always had, to deal with young offenders by way of caution or through restorative justice processes. They also have the ability to take no action if that is the most appropriate way to deal with a particular young person. Specialist child protection police are very skilled at diverting young people from the youth justice system with these processes and they will continue with the high rates of success they currently have.

What will change, though, is that, if a young person disregards that caution or restorative justice process and decides to reoffend and ends up appearing before a court, the court will now know about those previous processes. Putting that information in the hands of a judicial officer will allow them to make a better assessment of the best way forward to ensure the young offender is dealt with appropriately. I fully support judges knowing that information. I trust them with that information.

The laws will also allow appropriate family and media into our juvenile court systems. Opening up the courts will allow victims of crime and the people of Queensland a level of transparency that has been sadly lacking in the last decade. These strong laws remove detention as a last resort, providing judges with more options to deal with young offenders. This law has been a handbrake on our judiciary considering appropriate sentences for the most serious offences by the most serious offenders. That handbrake will now be removed as we hand over to our judiciary the discretion to deliver appropriate penalties for those most serious offences that are in line with community and victim expectations. These strong laws finally put victims as a priority for consideration by the judiciary.

I want to let victims know the Crisafulli LNP government is listening. The Crisafulli LNP government is acting. The Crisafulli LNP government is doing what it said it would do and delivering the first step in the reform of the youth justice system before Christmas with the Making Queensland Safer Bill so that Queenslanders do not have to go into the summer holiday period suffering any longer under the weak Labor laws.

The committee report has one recommendation—that is, the bill be passed. These strong laws and these reforms are what Queenslanders voted for in the recent election. They are desperate for change, desperate for a government that listens and desperate for a government that will act in the best interests of victims and the community. I commend the bill to the House.