




Speech By
Michael Berkman

MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

Record of Proceedings, 10 December 2024

MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

Motion, Amendment to Second Reading Question

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (8.51 pm): I want to make a few comments on the proposed second reading amendment. I do not require 10 minutes to do it. I obviously support the second reading amendment. More time to consider such a significant bill is obviously warranted, but I do not see why we should be stopping with a few clauses in the bill. The stakeholders that appeared before the committee—and I say this as a member of the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee—were not just concerned about clauses 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 22, 28, 37 et cetera—

Mr Hunt: Some of them, not all.

Mr BERKMAN: The chair can quack all he likes down there. Was there a single stakeholder who appeared at the committee hearing who said they did not think this was rushed, who said that they were not concerned about the truncated timeframes? I cannot think of a single one. Maybe the chair wants to get to his feet and speak to the second reading amendment that is proposed, but I suspect he will not come up with one because there were none. Everyone who appeared told us that these are far-reaching, gravely significant proposals in this bill and, what's more, they all said that not only had they not had enough time to scrutinise the bill, but that they were concerned—and this included evidence from Voices for Victims—that these amendments might make the community less safe. The government might want to turn a blind eye to those observations, they want might want to pretend that it did not happen, they might want to truncate these processes to the point of absurdity to try to quiet the views of stakeholders, whether they are supportive or otherwise, but they cannot pretend that those views were not expressed.

To send it back to the committee is the most sensible move we could make because the process was, frankly, a sham. I am not just talking about all the usual deficiencies in a committee process where these portfolio committees are clearly locked down, tightly controlled by government members with the chair's casting vote. These are deficiencies in the committee process which we have been talking about for years in here. It is a ridiculous process, no matter how much work the secretariat does behind the scenes—and they did; they absolutely worked like stink to get this report done—and to support the committee to the point where we could sign something off in only eight days after the legislation was introduced. What a joke! Eight days! Do not even bother referring it to the committee if you are going to pretend eight days is consultation.

Mr Molhoek: These aren't new ideas.

Mr BERKMAN: The member for Southport says these aren't new ideas. Again, we are left with this ridiculous situation where one side of the House tries to justify their procedural excesses on the basis that the other side has done worse. Where does that get us? Eye for an eye and the whole world is blind. If you really claim to have any respect for this institution—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Maiwar, your comments will come through the chair, please.

Mr BERKMAN: If they really want to claim—Mr Speaker, I apologise—to have any respect for this institution, they just have to suck it up and actually deal with scrutiny. Five days to make submissions on the bill.

A government member: You had six months to make submissions for Queensland.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Maiwar has the call. He is the only one who has the call.

Mr BERKMAN: Again, lots of big talk from the tough guys who won the election. Yes, we know that. It is no surprise to anyone here, but this bill—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BERKMAN: Ok, let's be clear about this. Adult Crime, Adult Time is not a policy, it is a slogan. When you translate a slogan into legislation, or even a policy, it has to have some substance to it. No-one knew what they were proposing when we went to the election. We had, as a community, five days in total to put together submissions on this bill. Submitters deserve better than this; they absolutely deserve better. The Attorney-General says that this is about stalling or somehow it is about laziness. If I was being lazy about this, we could wave the damn thing through tomorrow and I would not have to think about it again. I want this to go back to my committee so we can spend the time that it deserves so that we can respect the process and properly scrutinise it.

This observation from the Attorney-General that we should be afraid over Christmas, I cannot let that one pass. 'The non-government members want the community to be afraid over Christmas.' Absolute rot! Again, it carries this underlying supposition that somehow doubling penalties is going to mean that 10- to 17-year-olds are actually deterred when this does nothing to address the underlying drivers of offending.

I wonder if they read the submission from YETI. I am pretty sure it was the YETI submission that said, 'Young people are not going to be aware of these changes. They are not going to have any deterrent effect.' When I put it to the director-general at the hearing—I asked him point-blank, a couple times over—can he provide evidence that increasing penalties in the way the bill proposes, will the Adult Crime, Adult Time act as anything of a deterrent for young people, we got nothing; we got crickets. What he did was he referred to a single journal article that is 15 years old and relies on data from the turn of the century, like that is somehow evidence enough to overturn decades and decades of well understood evidence about the likelihood of an increase in offending.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Maiwar, speak to the amendment, please. You are straying a little.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you, Speaker. This is not a radical proposal that we actually spend the constitutionally enshrined minimum six weeks talking about such significant legislation. For all the squawking we heard from the now government when they were in opposition about the government's excesses, we are at two sitting days so far and they have shown every bit as much interest in maintaining the integrity of this institution—far less, in fact, I would suggest—than the former government did.

I will leave my comments there. I support the second reading amendment and, in fact, I would say let's send the whole bill back. Let's think about it properly, let's take our time and actually do our jobs as legislators.