




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2024

QUEENSLAND COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources and Critical Minerals) (5.41 pm): This government will never stop in its work when it comes to tackling crime. There will always be more that can be done and we will not hesitate to take any evidence-based approach when it comes to tackling crime. Community safety is paramount and people deserve to feel safe in their own homes, as we all know. Addressing crime, particularly youth crime, starts with early intervention, but if someone does the wrong thing they must be held to account. That is what the Queensland Community Safety Bill will do. In Townsville we have seen some absolutely despicable acts when it comes to young offenders in stolen cars that have targeted emergency services vehicles. Put simply, this is disgusting and unacceptable behaviour.

This bill will make ramming emergency vehicles a standalone offence, with a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment. Anyone ramming an emergency vehicle and putting our emergency services personnel's lives on the line deserves to face the full consequences. Not only do offences like this put emergency services workers in danger, but if someone rams a vehicle that vehicle may not be useable for quite some time while it is being repaired. This obviously puts pressure on resources, too, and can have flow-on impacts. That is why this bill will make sure that people who target our police, paramedics and firefighters will face the full consequences of their actions under this legislation. Through this legislation, we are giving tools to the courts to ensure people are held to account when they break the law and put people's lives in danger. I am proud to be part of a government that is putting in place laws to make sure offenders face the consequences for their actions.

As part of this legislation we are expanding Jack's Law to give our police more power to detect and to find unlawfully possessed knives. For Townsville, these changes expand the framework to include shopping centres, entertainment venues while an event is being held, retail premises and licensed premises. We have already seen great results in Townsville from the initial laws, and these changes will help keep people even more safe. There is no reason whatsoever for someone to unlawfully carry a knife in a public space, and we make no apologies for targeting this.

This legislation is a key part of our \$1.28 billion comprehensive community safety plan. A part of this plan that I would like to highlight is Townsville's dedicated police helicopter. This was one of the first announcements Premier Steven Miles made when he became the Premier, because he knows, as the entire government knows, that community safety is so important. I have heard directly from hardworking police officers in Townsville how much of a difference this is making in our city. We will always back our police officers with the tools and the equipment they need if they ask for it. This is what we have done with this aerial asset. We know that these efforts are making a huge difference on the ground.

In Townsville, the latest statistics from the Queensland Police Service show that the number of unlawful use of motor vehicle offences committed by young offenders has decreased by 30 per cent. Our community safety plan and this legislation are focused on five pillars that are backed by evidence: supporting victims; delivering for our front line; detaining offenders to protect the community; intervening when people offend; and preventing crime before it occurs.

We all know that early intervention is incredibly important. That is why, through our community safety plan, we are investing in programs like the Townsville Street University, which I know the member for Thuringowa has been a long-time advocate for. This is complemented by our Putting Queensland Kids First plan, which is about ensuring young people get the best start in life. When they do not, often because of their circumstances, they can sadly go down the wrong path and find themselves on the wrong side of the law. I think everyone here would agree that stopping that from happening in the first place is incredibly important and is a key way to drive down crime. But this government will not back away from ensuring those who put our community at risk face the consequences of their actions. They are the community's expectations and they are certainly my expectations as well.

The Queensland Community Safety Bill and our community safety plan are about addressing all aspects when it comes to crime. It is not a four-word slogan; it is a comprehensive and evidence-based plan to disrupt, reduce and prevent crime. The Miles government will always do whatever it can to ensure the safety of Queenslanders is put first. I commend the bill to the House.