




Speech By  
**Hon. Tim Nicholls**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 December 2024

**MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL**

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Minister for Health and Ambulance Services) (5.14 pm): Today is the culmination of 10 years of hard work by the LNP. I well remember back in 2015-16 when the then freshly minted Labor government, with no mandate, started watering down the youth crime laws—youth crime laws that had been effective, that had driven bikies out of the state and that had seen the presentation numbers of young offenders in courts decline. As the member for Scenic Rim indicated, the Childrens Court annual report of 2014-15 records a decline of five per cent in individual presentations of youth offenders to the Childrens Court. Labor did not listen. They knew better. They abandoned the principle of deterrence and at the same time failed to embed gold standard early intervention. They failed on both counts. That failure became apparent almost immediately.

For the better part of a decade, the people of Townsville have been calling out for stronger laws. In 2017, during the election campaign, we promised a second police helicopter for Townsville. We were derided and laughed at by those opposite for suggesting that what the police told us they wanted, together with more boots on the ground, was what was needed to address the crime crisis that was developing in Townsville. They tried to laugh it out of court. Then, in the dying days of a dysfunctional government, they finally came to the party and said they would provide a helicopter for Townsville—but it was not just Townsville; there were helicopters everywhere. It was like a scene out of *Good Morning, Vietnam*—choppers here, choppers there. One could just ring up the then police minister and say, 'How about a chopper here?' They would run a two-week campaign, pretend to have been advocating for their community for 10 years and they would have a chopper landing in their front yard.

The reality is far different. The reality is there have been far too many tragedies. In the last term of government, there were 16 victims of alleged young offenders. All too tellingly we have heard the story of the member for Capalaba's family. I remember that day in January. It was the first shadow cabinet meeting we held in 2021. We held it down in the Redlands the weekend after it happened. That weekend we felt for the member for Capalaba. One of our earliest commitments was to do something about the youth crime crisis. We have held true to that promise, not only to the member for Capalaba but also to the families of all of those other people who have tragically lost their lives far too early because the youth crime laws that were working were watered down by Labor.

Those opposite misguidedly started changing the laws to remove consequences for actions. They gave a clear signal to young offenders that it did not matter what you did, it did not matter how many times you did it, you would be back on the street to do it again. We have heard the stories from Townsville of cars being stolen, the offenders being put before the courts and four hours after they had been given a suspended sentence and let out the front door they were arrested again by the police, having stolen a car. We have heard the stories from the members from Townsville. I have lost count of the number of times I went up to Townsville. I have been up there plenty of times. It is still one of my favourite places to go to. It was one of the first places I went to as health minister. Every time we went up there the No. 1 issue was the cars that were being stolen and the change in the dynamic. No longer were the young offenders stealing cars for a joy ride and leaving them on the side of the road; they were

stealing cars and deliberately driving them at police. It was a game of chicken: who was going to blink first. It subsequently became a lottery of which police officer was going to be injured first, which car was going to be put off the road first and who was going to die first.

That lottery starts ending with the passage of these laws. These laws will take direct and strong action, not only for the people of Townsville—but it is important for the people of Townsville because they have been the epicentre of it for such a long time—but also for the people of Far North Queensland and Cairns where it has been a longstanding problem, as the member for Cook knows all too well—a problem that the current member for Cairns denied. I remember the debates in this place: it was not a problem, people were not talking to him about it. It was a problem in Cairns as much as it was in Townsville. In fact, in some respects some aspects of it started earlier.

It is a problem. It is a problem in Goondiwindi, it is a problem at the Gold Coast and it is a problem in Clayfield. In Brisbane, the very first large public meeting on crime was held in 2019 at the Eagle Farm Racecourse. Over 220 people from the Clayfield electorate came along to express their frustration at a weak Labor government that was failing to take strong action. The Labor government paid the price for its weak action and for not standing up for Queenslanders no matter where they are in the state. No matter if they are in Bulimba, Brisbane or Barcaldine—it does not matter where they are—they all feel the same pain.

During the middle of the election campaign, in my electorate of Clayfield, from the river to the racecourse, Racecourse Road was hit by youth criminals in a stolen car. They drove up the road and broke into five properties in one night, from midnight until 4 am. That was recorded on cameras. You could track them every step of the way. It is no wonder that the business owners were frustrated. It is no wonder that costs were going up for insurance and other business costs, such as for replacing plate glass windows, replacing the cash taken out of the till and replacing spoiled and stolen goods.

That is why on 26 October the community spoke as loudly as they did. That is why, together with our policies to heal the health crisis, the community decided to elect an LNP government that will make sure that we deliver value for money, deal with the cost-of-living crisis and manage the things that the Labor Party in their arrogance had ignored for too long. We are doing that this week with the passage of these bills. If a youth criminal thinks about breaking into someone's house, now they will think again.

I have heard a litany of excuses from those opposite. I have seen them ducking and weaving: they support the laws but they sort of don't support them being passed this week. On Monday, they scuttled out of their own caucus meeting—I think that is what they call it. They ducked away and bundled into the lifts. You could not get into the lifts because they were all bundled in there, coming up from level 4 to avoid the media so they did not have to express an opinion. I am pretty sure the member for Miller does not want to support them. The member for McConnel does not want to support them. The member for Cooper does not want to support them. We just heard from the member for Toohey, who sticks to his principles; I will give him that. The former police minister is the one who brought in the laws and trashed the conventions of this place by bringing in those changes without any notification. Talk about divided. Talk about political cowardice. They do not know what they want and they do not know how to get it.

Labor's actions created the youth crime crisis, and their repeated refusal to acknowledge that during their time in government is to their enduring shame and it will be to their enduring shame. They consistently told Queenslanders that youth crime was decreasing when the victim numbers were actually going up. However, it is not just about that. We also need gold standard early intervention, which I have spoken passionately about. I commend the minister for bringing an enormous amount of money and effort to making sure that young offenders are able to turn around their lives. We saw some of the great work that is being done, and more of it will be done under the funding program that the member will bring forward.

As my time on this particular matter comes to an end, it is appropriate to recognise the waste of time that was Labor's 10 years in office and, more importantly, the loss of life that will be their enduring shame for as long as every member in this place stays in this House. We will tie them to it until they leave. It will be a long time that we will be doing it.