




Speech By  
**Tony Perrett**

**MEMBER FOR GYMPIE**

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Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2024

### **QUEENSLAND COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL**

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (5.32 pm): I rise to speak on the Queensland Community Safety Bill. This bill makes a broad range of amendments which are supposed to deal with crime. It amends 14 different pieces of legislation. They deal with multiple issues about criminal justice, youth justice, public safety, law enforcement, sentencing, transport, firearms and weapons. Among those issues are the approach to dealing with youth crime, drink-driving, hooning offences, electronic monitoring, safeguards for phone calls from youth detention centres, informed consent about the electronic service of documents, the effectiveness of Jack's Law, handheld scanning trial, domestic and family violence and the Childrens Court.

That a bill as far reaching as this was given only two weeks for people to make a submission—and only two public hearings and two public briefings were held—demonstrates disdain for consultation by a government which does not want to be held accountable.

AgForce called it disrespectful. It submitted that the size of the bill and considerable number of amendments 'raises valid concern that the time allowed for proper consultation, for stakeholders to obtain a thorough understanding of each aspect, is lacking and disrespectful.' The Shooters Union called it unfeasible. The Queensland Council of Civil Liberties' submission raised numerous concerns including that it registered a strong protest against the very short period of time to make a submission.

I wrote to the committee requesting an extension because the time line was insufficient for people to thoroughly review and consider the full ramifications of the bill. That the government is introducing amendments to its own bill demonstrates how prescient that comment was. It is having to amend its own bill. The response I received said that the restricted time line was needed to provide the Queensland Police Service time to respond to issues raised in the submissions, to invite witnesses to the public hearing, and to draft a report. There were only two public hearings and only two public briefings.

I support any legislation which protects victims, reduces the number of victims, and provides consequences for actions for perpetrators of crime. This bill fails to achieve those goals. The government created the youth crime crisis. This has not occurred in the last few months. It has been years in the making. Youth criminals used to run from police; now they run at them.

The public is being asked to dismiss the government's record of the last 10 years. Since 2015-16, offences involving stolen cars have increased 101 per cent; break and enter is up 45 per cent; other theft up 45 per cent; assaults up 190 per cent; and robbery up 123 per cent. The government's priorities are media management and spin. That is why in the four years to March this year it increased the number of ministerial staffers by 21.7 per cent, yet frontline police staff have increased by only 0.46 per cent. That is the priority. This is about appearing to act while the government is philosophically opposed to consequences for actions.

The bill does not remove detention as a last resort. The government's own statement of compatibility revealed the truth when it said the amendments are 'clarifying positions and are not intended to change the law'. The government does not want consequences for action.

The latest data shows that in 2022-23, there were 11,191 children offenders—an extra 557 offenders in only 12 months. More than half of all criminals committing car thefts and break-ins are children aged between 10 and 17.

On every measure, crime has risen substantially under this government. Over the term of this government between 2015-16 and 2023-24, robbery in the Gympie Queensland Police Service division has increased by 550 per cent. In the same period, unlawful use of a motor vehicle is up 167 per cent; unlawful entry up 87 per cent; other theft up 61 per cent; assault up 110 per cent; and breach of DV protection orders is up 123 per cent.

The total number of offences in the Gympie QPS division have increased from 3,114 in 2014 to 4,398 last year. It is already 2,511 this year with four months to go.

When Labor watered down youth crime laws in 2015-16 by removing detention as a last resort, it created a generation of hardcore repeat offenders. I was on the committee when the government started its ideological campaign to water down the laws. A Townsville resident spoke about her frustration, saying—

The government have been in power for 12 months now and during that time they have repeatedly said they would get tough on crime. The public were sick of hearing about crimes happening and having little to no feedback if the offenders were caught. We have yet to see if the courts use these reforms to their full and proper potential so that they are actually given a chance to work.

Ten years on, the situation has continued to deteriorate.

In contrast, the LNP will remove detention as a last resort. We will install consequences for actions. We will fix the youth crime crisis by introducing the Making Queensland Safer Laws by the end of the year. We will open the Childrens Court to deliver transparency by placing the onus on the court to allow media into the Childrens Court unless there are very real grounds for it causing safety issues for the offender.

The majority of this bill would be regarded as not contentious by most reasonable people. The bill mentions firearm theft but proposes nothing to address it. That is why I welcome the amendments foreshadowed by the shadow minister for police to deal with cracking down on firearm theft, not law-abiding firearm owners. Concerns were raised about the expansion of the fit and proper person test. My office has been inundated with law-abiding firearm owners raising issues. I have forwarded their concerns to the minister. This would not have been necessary if the minister had listened to the members of the ministerial firearm advisory council. This is what happens when you rush legislation.

Bad legislation has unintended consequences. There were genuine concerns about whether people whom courts have decided against recording a conviction for will be captured by these legislative changes. There were genuine concerns about whether they would then be prohibited from holding a weapons licence and there were genuine concerns about whether people captured by these changes would have their weapons licence immediately revoked.

AgForce said that many amendments 'lack credible data and evidence' or adequate justification. It said—

... there are no statistics to indicate that there is any risk to public safety from the holders of legitimate firearms licences.

It raised concerns about the unintended consequences for business owners where a firearm is required to undertake day-to-day operations to care for livestock, deal with distressed livestock and protect livestock from feral animals. AgForce submitted—

... wide-ranging amendments are likely to result in severe unintended consequences, penalising innocent individuals and obstructing community involvement in crime reporting and resolution.

It said that the provisions should be 'fair, practical, and effective in enhancing public safety without infringing on individual rights'.

The government has history in demonising law-abiding firearm owners. In 2020 the police minister and the agriculture minister could not close firearm shops quickly enough. They used the cloak of COVID-19 to unilaterally close licensed dealers and armourers. They gave no notice to farmers, primary producers or affected businesses. Law-abiding firearm owners should have trust in government. Unfortunately, this has been eroded.

It is clear that the government has no enthusiasm for or investment in addressing youth crime. This is a political problem, not a crime problem. The government has treated crime as a management problem which will go away with announcements and carefully crafted media spin. Given the government's track record, it is hard to believe it can address the crime crisis. It is hard to believe it will not water down policies. If the government truly wants to address the crime crisis, I urge members to support the LNP amendments. We owe it to victims to get this right.