




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (12.53 pm): Even after 10 years of being an incompetent Labor government, those opposite are in total disarray when it comes to youth crime. They still cannot decide if they are going to support victims or not. The latest media reports are about an emergency meeting being held. Those opposite have no idea whether the victims of Queensland should be supported or whether they should retain the legislation that they brought in in support of criminals. They are in denial about the damage they have caused to our community—the hundreds of thousands of victims they have created in our community and the increasing cost of insurance.

This disgraceful Labor opposition destroyed our legislative processes when in government and now they are in complete disarray as to what to support. My community has already seen this. We have had people in Toowoomba attacked in their houses with tomahawks. Poor Robert Brown was killed in our main street by a youth offender. When we asked the then premier to come to town, she sent a couple of her ministers who told us that there was basically no problem, that everything would be fine. It was not fine. Crime has been going up. Insurance premiums have been going up.

It is disgraceful that, after all of the consultation, all of the discussions, all of the public scrutiny and all of the media reports this Labor opposition are so conflicted that they cannot decide whether they want to support victims or criminals. We are here to legislate for the benefit of the people of Queensland but what do we see on the other side? We see an opposition so conflicted that they do not know whether they should support victims or criminals.

Whose rights should we be looking after in this place? Should we be putting bars on our windows so we are safe in our homes or should we be putting behind bars the people who are entering our homes, taking our car keys, attacking us with tomahawks and killing people in the main street? These are the crimes that have been committed due to the legislation that the former government brought into this place.

We know that they have failed the people of Queensland. They even failed themselves. They are busy telling us that we should not lock up all of these kids, yet they did not provide for where they were going to put them. They are the ones who have been stashing them in watch houses and who had to change their own Human Rights Act to say that it would be okay. They did not plan. They did not prepare. They did not listen to victims. Even today at the last minute, in the eleventh hour, they still cannot be on the side of the victims of Queensland.

At the election the victims and the community of Queensland spoke loud and clear, but what do we see? We see opposition members having an emergency meeting about this legislation, because they still feel like they should be supporting the youth criminals—that we still need to be wrapping them in cotton wool and making sure their rights are looked after.

We have a plan to make sure they do not become recidivists. With regard to our early intervention programs, we will be investing \$175 million into Staying on Track and \$50 million into nine Regional Reset programs. It is not that we do not care, do not understand or do not support them. Instead of someone getting 72 hours of support when they are released early because of weak sentencing, we will be providing a comprehensive plan to try to reduce the rate of recidivism, down from the 91 per cent that the former government oversaw.

Those opposite are so conflicted that they cannot support these positive early intervention steps. They cannot support making sure someone who has done their time is looked after and reintegrated into our community with a sensible approach. We need tough sentences to make sure people understand that they will be held accountable for their actions.

We will keep our community safe. We will support victims. We will drive down insurance costs by making sure fewer cars are being stolen, fewer houses are being broken into and fewer people are being assaulted. At the same time, we will have early intervention programs. We will support those programs. We will make sure that someone who has served their time has a comprehensive program to help them become part of our community again. We want our community to be functional and safe.

Labor do not know whether or not they should be supporting this legislation. They are in total crisis and are completely conflicted as to how they will deal with this piece of legislation. Ultimately, they have spent 10 years supporting criminals. They have spent 10 years quoting experts. I remember sitting here listening to them quoting the experts and saying, 'As we weaken these laws, everything will be fine.' It was not fine. Members should go back and read what they said in this place 10 years ago and what we said would be the consequence of the actions they took. People need to be held accountable for the actions they take. This Labor opposition needs to be held accountable. That is why they are sitting on the opposition side of the chamber.

Even after hearing from all the victims and even after the election—even after people had their say at the ballot box—those opposite are still not listening to victims. Why is it so difficult for Labor members to support the people who are having their lives torn apart? I do not know. I wonder what is going on in the meeting. Labor have totally weak leadership. I cannot explain to anybody why the Leader of the Opposition, the former premier, cannot support victims in Queensland. Clearly, he does not support them. If he did, they would not be having an emergency meeting right now to try to resolve these issues.

The victims of Queensland need to have their voices heard in this place. This legislation should be supported and the Labor opposition members should hang their heads in shame.