




Speech By  
**Barbara O'Shea**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

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Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2025

**MAKING QUEENSLAND SAFER (ADULT CRIME, ADULT TIME) AMENDMENT  
BILL**

 **Dr O'SHEA** (South Brisbane—ALP) (8.55 pm): I rise today to address the Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time) Amendment Bill 2025. Having spent many years working in emergency medicine, I have witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of violent crime on individuals and families, and I believe that every member of this House shares a commitment to building safer communities across Queensland. Everyone has the right to feel safe in their home and when out and about in their community.

Residents in my electorate of South Brisbane are concerned about rising crime rates in our community, with break and enter, car theft and stealing from shops affecting our residents and business owners. I would like to acknowledge our local police at West End, South Bank and Dutton Park police stations for their hard work in keeping our community safe in their rapid response to acute incidents as well as crime prevention through increased patrols and the presence of the mobile police beats at different locations in our electorates. I also thank them for engaging with our community through our recent Coffee with a Cop morning.

I believe that youth offending is one of the most serious and complex challenges we face as a state, and that demands a serious, sustained and credible response. Early intervention programs are essential as well as effective rehabilitation including education for these children and young people. With increasing numbers of children and young people being detained, it is essential there are sufficient places in youth detention centres to ensure meaningful rehabilitation programs can be run as well as to guarantee the safety of detention centre staff. The Australian Workers' Union stated in their submission—

Queensland's Youth Detention Centres are running at constant capacity. Our members do not currently have the staffing resources to safely run these facilities day-to-day, let alone provide consistent access to education or meaningful rehabilitation programs.

With this Bill set to increase the number of young people in the system carrying longer sentences, we foresee a surge in detainees entering a system that is already stretched to its limits. This raises a series of concerns about how the Queensland Government plans to accommodate this influx.

The Queensland Police Union, the QPU, also raised concerns about the availability of sufficient places in youth detention centres to ensure that children and young people do not end up being held in watch houses, stating in its submission—

... the QPU again flags the potential for increased or sustained detention capacity issues at Queensland Police Service (QPS) watchhouses. Young offenders remanded in custody or sentenced to a period of detention are held in QPS watchhouses until there is availability in a detention centre. Youth detention centres are continually over capacity and young offenders are often held in QPS watchhouses for lengthy periods.

There is universal agreement that police watchhouses are not suitable for the extended detention of young people. Police watchhouses are unable to provide the level of care and support that is present in a youth detention centre.

As a doctor working in drug dependency, I treated a number of patients while they were held in watch houses and they are definitely no places for children. With it taking up to four years for a youth detention centre to be built, I would urge the government to plan now to ensure there is adequate capacity.

We should acknowledge that rushing through legislation to address complex social issues rarely produces sustainable outcomes. The bill before us significantly expands the list of offences for which young people will face adult penalties, applying the same maximum and mandatory sentences as an adult would receive under the Criminal Code. Such a substantial legislative change demands scrutiny.

We are informed that an expert legal panel provided advice which underpins the proposed reforms. However, neither parliament, relevant stakeholders nor the broader Queensland community has had the opportunity to review this advice. This is at odds with what Queenslanders expect and deserve—laws developed with transparency, through thorough and careful deliberation and on the basis of sound evidence. I may be very new to this parliament; however, I cannot understand why the government would not make this advice public. I respectfully call upon the government to table the expert panel's advice without further delay.

Finally, I firmly believe that effectively addressing youth offending requires more than legislation focused solely on punitive measures. We must also confront the underlying issues that fuel criminal behaviour—issues such as housing instability, addiction, untreated mental illness and rough sleeping. In my electorate of South Brisbane and across Queensland too many people are falling through the cracks of our overstretched housing and support systems, ending up at risk of exploitation, substance abuse and violence, perpetuating cycles of crime and victimisation. Any credible strategy for improving community safety must include meaningful investment in addressing these foundational issues, as only by intervening early and addressing these root causes through evidence-based legislation and policy can we achieve the high levels of community safety that Queenslanders rightly expect and deserve.