




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

Record of Proceedings, 20 May 2025

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

 **Ms MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (8.36 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time) Amendment Bill 2025. In December 2024 the Homicide Victims' Support Group, in its submission to the first Making Queensland Safer Bill, wrote—

... we urge the Government not to rush through key pieces of legislation. We recognise that the Government did state it would be a priority, but victims of crime have had a lifetime of Governments doing things to them and when legislation like this is rushed it can have unintended consequences and it can also trigger victims who already distrust Government.

There are no truer words, because here we are dealing with the unintended consequences of the LNP government's rushed laws in December. Here we are dealing with the consequences of a government that went to an election with a slogan about community safety, a government that seriously believed that their first tranche of laws would solve the complex issues of community safety and youth crime and would wrap it up with a big bow by Christmas. In seven months what we have seen is nothing but a piecemeal approach to crime laws: the first tranche of their the Adult Crime, Adult Time legislation, last minute amendments to the Youth Justice Act in unrelated CCC legislation, the Youth Justice (Monitoring Devices) Amendment Bill, making Jack's Law permanent laws and now a second tranche of Adult Crime, Adult Time legislation. It is absolutely shambolic and shows this government has absolutely no detailed plan and is now scrambling and using distraction because it is clear that they are failing at the one thing they promised the people of Queensland: that crime would come down.

Whilst the government is choosing to cherrypick the data that helps them, the QPS crime data is painting the true picture. In Far North Queensland, from January to April 2025, compared to the same period last year, unlawful use or possession of a motor vehicle was up 8.6 per cent and robbery was up 34.5 per cent. In Townsville for the same comparative period, burglary was up 11.8 per cent; serious assault was up 7.3 per cent; and unlawful use or possession of a motor vehicle was up 10.4 per cent. As the Premier himself said in a ministerial statement on 14 March, 'there is no overnight fix', and 'It will take time to break the cycle of crime.' Does that sound familiar? This certainly was not their language or tone when they were in opposition. They said if elected they would have crime down by Christmas. My favourite comment, which was clearly in the government's speaking points to all its members and was just said by the member opposite, is that they are seeing green shoots—green shoots everywhere. By the time the 14th member on that side has said it they will almost start to believe it.

The bill proposes to insert an additional 20 new offences into section 175A of the Youth Justice Act as part of the second tranche of offences to which the Adult Crime, Adult time sentencing regime applies. This includes attempt to murder, torture, rape and kidnapping. As the explanatory notes make clear, these offences are being included following advice from the Expert Legal Panel about offences that cause most harm to individuals and to the community more broadly. The appointment of the Expert Legal Panel has not been without controversy: there was no clarity on how the individuals of the panel

were chosen, who else applied and why they were not considered for the panel. We have since discovered that an individual with political links to the LNP was chosen, something the LNP Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support seemed oblivious to, which seems a little unbelievable.

The opposition's statement of reservation also questioned why the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council, an existing body that can be commissioned to undertake this work, was not utilised to provide advice to the government. We cannot turn to the advice that the LNP Crisafulli government has relied upon to add these 20 new offences in the legislation because it has been kept secret. Again, that is unbelievable. From the evidence provided to the committee, we know that the Expert Legal Panel did provide advice to the LNP Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support. From this we can deduce that the advice was then relied upon and considered by the Queensland cabinet in respect of the bill.

Clearly the minister can make that advice public but, when questioned as to why she will not make the advice public, the minister prefers to engage in histrionics and make false accusations about the opposition, as evidenced by her appearance on channel 9 last night. I think I watched that about five times. It was a really impressive display of delusion.

If the minister had actually paid any attention to the public hearings on the bill, she would have heard from actual key and valued stakeholders who asked exactly the same question we asked: show us the evidence. Trudy Reading from Voice for Victims said—

We are not aware of any information and we certainly have not seen anything at all.

Aimee McVeigh from the Queensland Council of Social Service said—

... we have not had the benefit of reviewing or considering that advice in order to then provide feedback in relation to the bill. We are asking the government to release the advice provided by the Expert Legal Panel.

QATSICPP said—

We have asked that ... the advice of the expert legal panel be publicly released to guide any future amendments.

The Queensland Law Society said—

Yes, the society would support the disclosure of that report so that we can ensure that legislative change is evidence based and the basis for which these amendments are made is disclosed so that we can appropriately consider whether or not they are justified.

Many more stakeholders have raised concerns including PeakCare, the Victims' Commissioner, the Queensland Human Rights Commission and the Uniting Church in Australia. It is very clear that the stakeholders who engaged with the committee process and who are intimately involved with youth justice issues have called for the Expert Legal Panel advice to be released.

It is extremely disingenuous of the LNP government to say that this is just Labor being oppositional about the laws when it is simply the Labor opposition giving voice to and sharing the views of the many stakeholders who believe that the Expert Legal Panel advice should have been released at the beginning of the process. This would have allowed all stakeholders and, indeed, all Queenslanders to understand the evidence the Crisafulli LNP government relied upon for this legislation. We also do not know who the Expert Legal Panel consulted with because the majority of the key stakeholders were not spoken with, did not make a submission to the panel and, of course, as we know, did not see the final advice. The secrecy is very strange. It really speaks to a lack of transparency, governance and integrity.

What is also clear is that without a proper plan seven months in we are yet to see the government's rolled-gold intervention programs. Do members remember those? The Premier kept talking about them and the Minister for Youth Justice kept talking about them but where are they? It is difficult to find any stakeholders and, indeed, any reasonable person in our state who does not believe that early intervention programs and proper investment in those programs is key to breaking the cycle of crime. Stakeholders are rightly concerned about the lack of clarity regarding the promised programs, including the Justice Reform Initiative which stated—

... these programs are yet to be implemented and it is unclear whether they will have the desired therapeutic components and outcomes.

PeakCare said—

Expanding the use of detention without corresponding investment in early intervention, prevention and the supporting infrastructure of the legal and court systems will continue to result in more children being held in adult watchhouses for extended periods.

Clearly, the most instructive revelation through the committee hearings and through questioning of the department is that limited new funding has been allocated and the Crisafulli LNP government is currently relying on the programs procured and funded by the former Labor government. Given that the government is quick to say that their laws are being bolstered by investment in early intervention and rehabilitation, it appears that it is Labor's rolled-gold initiatives that are getting the government through.

Of course, one of the unintended consequences has been the capacity tsunami that the minister is struggling to understand. The department charged with the responsibility of providing youth detention centres appears not able to undertake any accurate modelling regarding capacity issues as a result of the first tranche and now the second tranche of laws. The Wacol Youth Remand Centre, commissioned by the former Labor government, has only just come online. According to the department, a new remand centre would take approximately 16 months to deliver. A full-blown facility like the one being delivered at Woodford would take 3½ years.

In their testimony, the Australian Workers' Union made it abundantly clear that the youth detention centres are running at constant capacity. It does not take a genius to see that, with this bill set to increase the number of young people in the system, there is likely to be a surge in detainees entering a system that is already stretched. The AWU, which represents the workers in those centres, has rightly asked how the government plans to accommodate that influx.

As parliamentarians, we do not have the Expert Legal Panel advice on how these laws were determined. We do not have modelling on what the laws will mean for existing and future remand and detention facilities. We do not have early intervention programs being rolled out as promised by the LNP government. We do not have a cohesive approach to the legislation with bills and amendments being introduced almost every second week. What we have effectively is a vibe and a youth justice minister who is more interested in screeching at everyone, including journalists, than actually doing her job. The people of Queensland had high expectations and trust when they voted for the Crisafulli LNP government on the singular issue of crime and already we are seeing those expectations and trust eroding with the actions of this inept LNP government.