




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR STRETTON

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

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (10.40 pm): I would like to start by responding to comments made before by the Minister for Police, who rose in this place to respond to the opposition and, in particular, the member for McConnel, who raised media reports of a young offender breaching bail 40 times this year—that is, this year under this government, under this police minister, under this Premier. The minister certainly seemed a little bit triggered and a little bit nervous maybe. He certainly raised a few issues but he did not respond to what had happened this year under his watch. He did not answer any of the questions. He certainly did not take any responsibility. Queenslanders remember clearly that the LNP promised to have this fixed by Christmas. Instead all we get from the Minister for Police is more excuses. Victims deserve better. This bill is a third attempt to clean up the legislative mess that this government has created.

Let me begin with what unites us all: every Queenslander deserves to feel safe in their home, in their workplace, on their streets and in their communities. This is not in dispute, but how we achieve that safely—how we enact laws that are just, effective and enduring—is where this government continues to fail. This bill is not a proactive solution; it is a political repair job. It is an admission by the Premier that the laws rushed through late last year—laws he sold as the cornerstone of his government—were botched. Queenslanders were promised solutions by Christmas. Instead we have had to return to this House again and again to fix sloppy, ill-considered legislation.

A number of submissions and witnesses acknowledged that they had already submitted to this same committee on this topic on multiple occasions in the last few months, because this is now the fourth time since December we are debating changes to the act. This is not good governance; it is just reactive politics. The opposition does not oppose strong laws. We support strong laws, evidence-based, community-informed laws that genuinely improve safety outcomes. What we have seen from this government is a piecemeal, headline driven approach—one that has ignored experts, misled the public and kept Queenslanders in the dark.

During committee consideration, many stakeholders raised their concerns with the legislative history that brings us to where we are today. Before the election, the Premier claimed the laws were already written. We asked for those laws to be released early so that stakeholders and parliamentarians could examine them. We offered to work through to Christmas Eve if necessary. Instead of embracing transparency, this government cloaked itself in arrogance and secrecy. It rushed the original laws through parliament in a single week, cutting short community consultation and expert review.

What was the result? Glaring omissions. Attempted murder—one of the most serious offences imaginable—was not included in the original list. Neither was rape nor attempted rape. These are not minor oversights. They are fundamental failures that show this government was more interested in slogans than substance—a point that several submissions made.

In the aftermath of that failure, the government hastily convened what it called an 'expert legal panel' to justify its extensive legislative backflip, but this was no ordinary panel. As reported by the *Courier-Mail*, the government struggled to find credible experts willing to endorse their botched laws. They ended up appointing an individual with personal links to a ministerial staffer to chair the panel. To this day, not a single page of the panel's advice has been made public.

This is not how you build community trust. It is not how you govern with integrity. If this panel's advice is truly the cornerstone of these new laws—if it is the evidence that this government claims to be acting on—then why are they hiding it? Why not table the report? Why not show Queenslanders the evidence?

The opposition is not alone in demanding transparency. Numerous stakeholders, including the Queensland Law Society, the Youth Advocacy Centre, QCOSS, the Queensland Human Rights Commission and even the Victims' Commissioner, have all called for the release of the panel's advice. None of them were consulted. None of them saw the advice. Yet the government continues to rely on that very advice to justify sweeping changes to the act.

We also note the ongoing failure to plan for the real-world impact of these laws. The government is quick to talk about increased detention, but where is the capacity to support it? We are not the only ones to have raised these concerns. The Police Union, PeakCare, Anglicare and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service are just some of the groups that shared their concerns about this with the committee.

We know that the Wacol Youth Remand Centre, which is now online, was commissioned by the former Labor government. It is not a new initiative of this government. Beyond Wacol, what is the plan? Where are the new facilities? What is the timeline for expansion in places like Cairns or Woodford? The director-general of the Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support could offer no consistent answer. In one breath he claimed it was 'too early' to model the law's impact. In the next breath he said the department 'models every day'. This kind of contradiction erodes public confidence and leaves our youth justice infrastructure exposed.

The same lack of planning extends to early intervention. The government touts a \$485 million investment in 'gold standard' intervention programs but, when pressed at the committee, the director-general could name just two modest programs—one in Rockhampton and one in Townsville. These programs received a few hundred thousand dollars each, not \$485 million, with the bulk of the funding still locked in the tender process. In other words, there is no delivery; there is only delay. What is worse is that the early intervention programs currently operating—the youth co-responder teams, the Intensive Bail Initiative and Transition 2 Success—are all Labor initiatives. This government has inherited programs that work and added nothing meaningful to them.

Stronger laws must be accompanied by stronger support systems for both offenders and victims. Here again the government is failing. The Premier promised that victims would be placed at the heart of this government's approach. When the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council released a report titled *The ripple effect*, which offered detailed recommendations for sentencing of rape and sexual assault, the government did nothing until the opposition wrote to the government sharing our plans to action the recommendations.

The submission to the committee from the Queensland Victims' Commissioner herself stated that the inclusion of rape and sexual assault in the Adult Crime, Adult Time framework is unlikely to meet community expectations unless these QSAC recommendations are also implemented. Why has it taken the government so long to act? Why are they so quick to implement secret advice from a hand-picked panel but slow to enact reforms from an independent expert body?

To address these failures, the opposition will be moving several amendments that align with recommendations made by many submissions and witnesses appearing before the committee. We will move to require the release of the Expert Legal Panel's advice. We will mandate an independent statutory review. We will move to implement the QSAC recommendations. We will introduce a requirement for monthly tabling of victim data and offence statistics.

Laws alone do not make our community safer. What matters is how those laws are developed, implemented and reviewed. That process must be evidence based, transparent and inclusive of the very people who will be most affected—victims, families and frontline workers. This government has shown time and time again that it prefers announcements to action and that it values optics over outcomes, but Queenslanders deserve better. They deserve laws that are properly consulted on, thoroughly debated and carefully implemented.

We on this side of the House will not obstruct the passage of these laws. We will not play politics with public safety, but we will hold this government accountable for every promise made, every promise broken and every victim it fails to protect.