




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (10.06 pm): I believe that we can agree on one matter, and that is that over the past several years victims of crime and crime in general have been the concentration of all persuasions of government, state and federal. Over that time no doubt society has changed as well in terms of how we deal with those changes in society and how we deal with changes in technology that has improved and the impact that that has had in terms of how we address crime. There are complexities in how we deal with crime. In my opinion, social media is an inherent risk to not only crime but the way that people react to it and general mental health and those sorts of other complications, as well as the challenges where youths are competing with one another as to who can steal the most expensive car and so on. Governments need to address those complexities and understand the unintended consequences when we introduce laws.

We have seen this in the states, federally and around the world. In fact, several years ago when I was in Bowen—and I was just having a conversation with my mate across the chamber here the member for Lockyer about crime numbers around the world—I remember that the senior sergeant had come back from an overseas trip when I was the acting police minister and he mentioned that the crime that was happening in Queensland was consistent with what was happening around the world and the places in Europe that he had been to. If people were genuine and researched, they would find that that is the case universally across the world in terms of not only the state of Queensland but other states throughout our nation.

Labor in government amended legislation and brought in measures to address many of the challenges we face when it comes to crime. One of those was Jack's Law. The other was vehicle immobilisers. They are just some examples where we saw reductions in crime. Other states have now adopted Labor's Jack's Law policy. I was in Melbourne late last year and saw police wanding people as they came off the trains. It was great to see other states have adopted Labor's laws from Queensland. I am really proud that a Labor government brought in those laws and we are seeing other states pick them up. Furthermore, submission 54 to the committee by LC Distributors states—

Prior to the Queensland election, on 27 September 2024, the then Government's announcement included advice from the Queensland Police Service that:

'Police advise that early evidence from the Vehicle Immobiliser Trial indicates the trial has been very successful. The Queensland Police Service advises that there have been no reports of a vehicle fitted with an immobiliser being stolen. In fact, police advise there have been several instances where an immobiliser has prevented vehicle theft.

Therefore, one has to wonder why the LNP government have not considered continuing this Labor initiative preventing car theft. It brings into consideration whether they are serious about addressing crime in this particular area of stolen vehicles.

Let us be clear about what this bill does. This bill puts more youths into detention without the infrastructure to support them or the programs to turn youth crime around. It adds 20 new offences to the Adult Crime, Adult Time regime, dragging more young people into adult penalties without considering whether that will reduce reoffending or make Queensland safer.

I acknowledge the work the committee did on its inquiry into this bill and commend the Labor members for their detailed summary, as provided in the statement of reservation—one of the most detailed reservations I have ever seen. As Acting Commissioner Shane Chelepy told the committee at the public hearing in Brisbane on 8 May 2025—

Under the expanded Making Queensland Safer laws, young offenders are liable to the same penalties for serious offences as adult offenders.

This is a one-size-fits-all approach and it is being rammed through without the systems in place to support it. The Director-General of Youth Justice, Robert Gee, confirmed during the committee briefing in Brisbane on 28 April 2025—

The intent of this legislation is to make sentences longer. That will have a compounding effect ... keep a very close and careful eye on that so that young people are not in watch houses.

We currently have 382 youth detention beds. Around 900 young people move through detention in a year. It takes up to four years to build a new facility. That was also referenced in the 28 April committee briefing by DG Robert Gee. Where are these kids supposed to go? We have seen this before. In 2013 and 2014, under the former Newman LNP government, overcrowding in youth detention centres became so severe that children were held in police watch houses for extended periods, sometimes for weeks. The front line knows it. From Cairns to Townsville to Redlands we heard directly from community leaders and frontline workers. On 7 May in Townsville at the public hearing, Enid Surha, chair of the Townsville First Nations Community Council, told the committee—

Taking a young person out of community for three weeks is not going to fix a lifetime of trauma for these children.

In Cairns, Aaron McLeod of the Community Justice Action Group said that locking young people up for longer will not work unless we address the causes of their behaviour. McLeod then went on to urge the committee to consider *Little Scandinavia* and the Scandinavian Prison Program as a model for transforming youth detention facilities. He said—

... this program emphasises rehabilitation over punishment, creating environments that foster personal responsibility and growth, learning, education and skill building.

That demonstrates that without structured support and rehabilitation we run the risk of creating repeat offenders. Even the Queensland Police Union, which supports aspects of the bill, warned during a public hearing in Brisbane earlier this year—

Youth detention centres are routinely over capacity ... police watch houses are not suitable for the extended detention of youths.

Detention can play a role—it can be a circuit breaker—but only when supported by structure, programs and proper resourcing. That is why we backed Detention with Purpose, a policy grounded in accountability, structure and rehabilitation—not just locking kids up, but using that time to change behaviour. As Deputy Director-General Michael Drane told the committee on 28 April, every young person in custody is assessed for health, education and cognitive issues so their plan targets the causes of offending. The need for that kind of targeted support is real. As Enid Surha, explained at the Townsville hearing—

Some of our children who are in situations are suffering from trauma ... children have had health issues that are not diagnosed, such as fetal alcohol syndrome or some other cognitive disabilities.

We still do not understand the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome. It was around at the time I was in the Senate addressing many of those issues throughout Australia. It still exists. We need to make sure we understand the effects of that so we can address the problems of these kids. It is through no fault of their own; it is as a result of what they experienced as they were growing up. That is why a system focused on assessment and intervention matters and that is what a functioning system should look like. We know from the evidence that incarceration without intervention increases the risk of reoffending. This bill does nothing to change that. This bill adds pressure without adding capacity. It builds expectations without creating meaningful solutions, no extra beds, no extra programs and no extra staff.

We now know that after the Premier's laws were obviously botched the government scrambled to assemble an expert panel to help justify his fix up. The government struggled to find experts willing to help them fix the Premier's botched laws. The government was calling experts asking them to sit on the fix-up panel. In the end they found a relation of a ministerial staffer to head the fix-up panel—the panelbeaters. What advice did they give the government to fix their botched laws? What advice did the youth justice minister and Premier get from the fix-up panel? Nobody knows because the government

is keeping it secret. The Labor caucus will not stand in the way of these laws, albeit botched laws. Now we are in the House fixing these botched laws again. We will not stand in the way of the Premier fixing the laws he botched, but we will judge the government on the effectiveness of them.

Perception is important. It does not matter what laws we introduce, the government is on the record now in relation to those changes and the Premier must stick to his commitment of resignation based on the figures these changes will deliver. We will keep an eye on the effectiveness of these laws. I support Labor's amendments which are about transparency, accountability and putting victims and victim-survivors first.