




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 20 May 2025

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

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (4.15 pm): Queenslanders deserve to feel safe and be safe. We as legislators have a responsibility to ensure appropriate, evidence-based, strong laws are considered properly by our committees and this parliament, but, ultimately, it is up to the elected government of the day to ensure that all resources, funding, wraparound services and programs are available to ensure that Queenslanders are kept safe.

I echo the contribution by the shadow minister for youth justice and thank her and the members for Toohey, Gladstone and Springwood for their work and assistance during the committee process. The Queensland opposition provided a 20-page statement of reservation to these laws which incorporates the views and feedback of many legal experts, stakeholders, frontline workers and organisations. It all comes back to the fact that the Crisafulli LNP government is relying on advice which no-one has seen from an expert legal panel which they hand-picked to justify these new laws. Those opposite continue to deny Queenslanders and members on this side of the House the opportunity of seeing the advice. It is important to know the advice provided because the majority of offences which are subject to these laws have either recorded none or an extremely low proportion of proven offences over the past five years.

To be clear: I, and the Queensland opposition, believe that none of these offences should be committed by children or adults and Queenslanders deserve to be protected. However, if new offences are being added to the LNP government's Adult Crime, Adult Time policy then there needs to be an explanation as to how they have derived and chosen these particular offences. As outlined by the shadow minister for youth justice, laws themselves will not solve the situation. We need to tackle the causes of crime—

Mr Lister: Yeah, we did—we got rid of you!

Ms SCANLON: We need strong investment in early intervention that will do the bulk of the heavy lifting.

Mr Stevens: Your laws created the problem!

Ms SCANLON: I take the interjections. To date we have seen very little progress by the LNP government in this space. I suspect we have seen more money spent on political advertising, or government advertising of the LNP's slogan, than new money from this government actually hitting the ground to deliver early intervention and prevention programs. That was effectively admitted by the Public Service during the committee process. Let us be clear: the programs that are running right now and supporting young Queenslanders in the criminal justice system are ones established by the former Labor government.

The new offences relate to sexual violence offences, including rape, attempt to commit rape, assault with intent to commit rape and sexual assault. These are serious offences and should not be committed. However, while the law we are dealing with today deals with children committing these offences, the Crisafulli LNP government had not acted on the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council report into sexual offences which called for changes to occur on how adults who commit sexual violence offences are dealt with. I am advised that in the 2023-24 year, the total offenders for rape and attempted rape over the age of 18 were 873, as opposed to 109 who were aged 10 to 17. In respect of other sexual offences, I am advised that for the same period, 1,950 offenders were over 18, as opposed to 416 who were aged 10 to 17. Again, let me be clear: no offence should be occurring. However, there is clear evidence that shows that these offences are predominantly committed by adults and yet the Crisafulli LNP government was not acting on the QSAC report until Labor announced our amendments. The question is why. The Victims' Commissioner stated—

I say this in light of the findings of QSAC report which found that penalties currently imposed on adults for rape 'do not adequately reflect the seriousness of this form of offending and the purposes of sentencing, including punishment, denunciation and community protection—particularly as these relate to offences against children'.

It is important that if one lever is pulled in the justice system, such as dealing with offences committed by children, that the other lever regarding offences committed by adults is looked at and pulled if required.

That is why the Queensland Labor opposition is acting. We are proposing amendments, which I have circulated and I table for the purpose of the House, to implement certain recommendations from the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council report entitled *Sentencing of sexual assault and rape: the ripple effect*.

Tabled paper: Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time) Amendment Bill 2025, amendments to be moved by Hon. Meaghan Scanlon MP [499](#).

Tabled paper: Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time) Amendment Bill 2025, explanatory notes to Hon. Meaghan Scanlon's amendments [500](#).

Tabled paper: Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time) Amendment Bill 2025, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Hon. Meaghan Scanlon's amendments [501](#).

This report has been collecting dust on the Attorney-General's desk since December of last year. I note the government has been pushed to introduce their own laws following our announcement. My message to those opposite is this: they could make these changes law this week if they supported Labor's amendments. Yesterday, the member for Waterford and I wrote to the Attorney-General in good faith and provided her with a copy of our proposed reforms. Today, we wrote again outlining that we would be ready to offer bipartisan support to declare an urgent bill to enact these changes. I table a copy of that letter.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 20 May 2025, from the Leader of the Opposition and member for Murrumba, Hon. Steven Miles MP, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and member for Woodridge, Hon. Cameron Dick MP, the member for Waterford, Hon. Shannon Fentiman MP, and the member for Gaven, Hon. Meaghan Scanlon MP to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity, Hon. Deb Frecklington, requesting that the Penalties and Sentences (Sexual Offences) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 be declared an urgent bill [502](#).

Let us get this done. Let us not make victims of rape and sexual assault wait. There have been 18 months of consultation, a rigorous process and a report by legal experts that is public, unlike the report that those opposite are relying on for the laws that they have introduced here. In his introductory speech the Premier said—

... the commitment of this government to victims and the safety of our community is paramount.

He went on to say—

Our government is putting victims at the heart of our plans for a safer Queensland.

That begs the question: why did the Crisafulli LNP government not take action to implement all if not some of the QSAC recommendations, including recommendation 2 to change the Penalties and Sentences Act to include recognition of harm done to victim-survivors during sentencing, until we announced these amendments? This applies to all offences. The Labor opposition is acting this week to ensure that this recommendation is implemented and that victim-survivors are better protected in Queensland.

The opposition is moving amendments to limit the use of good character references because, frankly, someone who commits rape is not a good bloke; far from it. Someone who perpetrates rape or sexual violence should not be able to reduce their sentence because they have managed to get some reference from a family member or friend or are able to somehow demonstrate that they are allegedly some sort of good upstanding member of the community. We are also proposing changes to ensure

there are tough penalties for perpetrators who rape or sexually assault children because making it an aggravating factor reinforces the seriousness of that offending. That is incredibly important when you think about the vulnerability of children and the type of person who commits an act as an adult against a child. This is a simple but important change to continue to protect vulnerable children in our state. If the Crisafulli government was actually genuinely wanting to do that then they would have acted by now.

The Premier said they were putting victims at the heart of their plan. Another amendment that the Labor opposition is seeking to pass will ensure that if a victim of crime does not give a victim impact statement then the court must not infer that the offences caused little to no harm to the victim.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I seek your clarification in relation to a bill before the House that is subject to the matters that the shadow attorney is talking about.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Attorney-General, thank you for your point of order. I have sought some advice and there is no point of order on that point.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Ms SCANLON: I take the interjection from the Attorney-General. This is an important piece of reform that we do think—

Mrs Frecklington: Hence there is a bill.

Ms SCANLON: I take the interjection from the Attorney-General. There is a bill because the Labor opposition had to drag the government, kicking and screaming, to introduce that bill. It has not taken the Labor opposition long to get these laws drafted and reviewed. That is something that the Crisafulli LNP government, with all the resources of government, could have done if it was a priority but they chose not to. They waited until they were dragged, kicking and screaming, because we decided to introduce amendments.

I call on those opposite, if they are genuine, to allow these laws to be considered in consideration in detail and to support them. It is disappointing but not surprising that the Crisafulli LNP government have not released the advice from their hand-picked LNP Expert Legal Panel. They would rather keep their advice, if it exists at all, under lock and key and not be open and transparent as they said they were going to be when they were in opposition.

A range of other concerns were made during the committee hearing around detention facility capacity. I note that the government is happy to open the Wacol Youth Remand Centre, which the former government commissioned, but again will not demonstrate to Queenslanders whether they have undertaken modelling to determine the impact of these laws. Those are very genuine questions that should be answered to ensure not only that young people who commit offences are not released to commit further crimes but also that our frontline workers are supported. I call on those opposite to support the amendments circulated by myself and the member for Bulimba, when the time comes.