




Speech By  
**Sandy Bolton**

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

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Record of Proceedings, 20 May 2025

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

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (6.07 pm): As we have heard, this bill increases from 13 to 33 the range of offences for which the Adult Crime, Adult Time laws apply. The extra offences include, for example, torture, rape, attempted rape, arson and trafficking in drugs. The contentious issue here, as with the first iteration of the laws, is that there is no evidence or publicly released expert advice that the laws will have any impact on the prevention of these horrendous crimes. Indeed, evidence provided in multiple reports or during inquiries over the years shows that they will make matters worse.

The rights of victims must be paramount and that includes the potential victims of the decisions we make right here, right now in this chamber. The No. 1 task before us is to keep our communities safe. The second is taking broken children, many of whom are victims themselves, and transition them into adults who do not have a reason to commit crimes. This requires long-term rehabilitation in a secure setting as well as the rehabilitation of the environment that created their criminality in the first place. Evidence has been presented that incarceration in a youth detention centre and then an adult prison, as is certain under this law, will not achieve that. The Gold Standard Early Intervention spoken about or a couple of weeks or months of reset will not do it either as we are talking about some 400 serious repeat offenders who commit the majority of the crimes across Queensland and intervention, gold or otherwise, has not succeeded and neither has detention. In all of this, the biggest failing is that these legislative amendments rely on waiting for a higher offence to occur and not on prevention.

According to the Australian Productivity Commission, youth detention costs on average \$2,162 per day—per day. As we have seen and heard in evidence, the specific cohort that commit these types of offences are not fearful of detention or the length of it, with over 90 per cent reoffending on release. That is why those already identified must have mandatory residential rehabilitation interventions prior to committing such crimes.

Recommendation 53 of the youth justice inquiry was to lower the threshold for those on the serious repeat offender index so that they and their environment can be targeted for long-term rehabilitation such as relocation sentencing, as put forward by the Katter party, regardless of the offence. We need to break out of this cycle and belief that longer and longer sentences work, which data from other jurisdictions and countries, including where the death penalty applies, demonstrates do not work. The bill may lower crime statistics in the short term. The Acting Police Commissioner at the public hearing in Brisbane noted that, in his personal experience, when recidivist offenders are not in community there are fewer offences committed in community, which is obvious and a given. However, as Queensland Family and Child Commissioner Natalie Lewis said—

The escalation of punitive responses to address community safety is not in the interests of victims—  
or of future victims for that matter—

—or of justice ... because the incarceration of children is ineffective as a deterrent ...

These laws will give us a couple of extra years free from another offence by that individual. However, as evidenced, the longer they are inside the more criminalised they become and the more dangerous. Ultimately, we will have a further increase in recidivist offenders—both youth and adult—cycling through the system. As the CEO of PeakCare said in relation to pressure being placed on reducing rates of crime—

... what we will see in the years to come, in the generations that are yet to be before us, is a tidal wave of consequence for the inaction of today.

Amongst the 60 submissions, support for the bill came understandably from areas that have been traumatised by repeat offenders, including Townsville, Goondiwindi and Cairns, and from Voices for Victims. As well, the Victims' Commissioner made many recommendations to improve youth justice and support for victims. Multiple frontline organisations were not supportive—and we have heard about many of them—including PeakCare, the Salvation Army, the Queensland Council of Social Services, the Australian Lawyers Alliance, the Human Rights Commission, the Queensland Family and Child Commission, and the list goes on. Three-quarters of the submissions opposed the bill.

The committee found that the bill is not compatible with human rights, as defined in the Human Rights Act; however, to counter this the government relied on the original Adult Crime, Adult Time bill's override declaration. Two committee members wrote a 20-page statement of reservation, and the legislation alone will not solve the problem, which everyone knows. A third member made a dissenting report stating that the committee report laid bare how completely partisan the committee system can be, highlighting what I have been raising and why it needs to be reviewed urgently. He opposed the bill, describing it as baseless, counterproductive legislation.

Many issues were raised by submitters, including that there has been no justification for the crimes selected, that it will not deter and that it will impact the positive effects of restorative justice. In amongst all of this, we have had no reports produced on the performance of the government's new laws or interventions so far. We do have cherry-picking of data, though. The government put out a media release in April that, over the last nine years, recorded offences increased 18 per cent and break-ins increased 28 per cent, yet over that period the Queensland population grew by 16 per cent so recorded offences essentially stayed steady. If you look at the report the data comes from, robbery rose one per cent and assault rose seven per cent, which with population growth of 16 per cent means they effectively fell. Both sides of the chamber do this and that is why we need easily comparable, up-to-date and accessible crime statistics to ensure evidence-based decisions and to end the confusion.

The Queensland Treasury released a crime report in April this year on crime up to June 2024—so it is 10 months out of date—predating the new laws, even the new government, by months. We do have raw data on arrests released by the QPS on a regular basis, which only tells part of the story. One needs to be a statistician to analyse these, especially the short-lived fluctuations up and down monthly that in and of themselves do not indicate what the trend is.

As for youth justice, there have been no updates to statistics on their website since September last year. Nothing. There have been no statistics on children and youth in detention and in watch houses or on those declared serious repeat offenders. We are actually all running blind. The New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has statistics on offences, court proceedings and young people held in custody all reported to December 2024. We urgently need our own Queensland crime statistics agency to provide some transparency and deliver, as the New South Wales bureau says—

Accurate, objective, and accessible evidence and information to inform public and government decision-making about crime and justice.

Adding to the lack of information or evidence, we do not have access to the advice the government is acting on, provided by the youth justice Expert Legal Panel, nor the questions put forward to them. This should immediately be made public and I cannot see any reason for it not to be. Further, we need an update on the progress of the youth justice inquiry's 60 recommendations, which we have not been able to obtain so far, including through a question on notice.

Finally, I want to thank the committee for its work and particularly for the continued participation of stakeholders across Queensland, both those in support and those against, as understandably all are extremely frustrated. We must have safer communities now and into the future. However, supporting legislation that public evidence says will make communities ultimately less safe, and that is using expert advice that is not being made public, is something no MP should be doing. The CEO of PeakCare said—

Every time we put forward bills that do not address the causal factors of crime we do not reduce victim numbers; we make every person in Queensland a victim.

I know every single MP in this House wants an end to all crime, and I ask all to think seriously about what he said.