

Speech By

Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Dr ROWAN (Moggill—LNP) (7.54 pm): I rise to support the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. With regard to the hypocrisy of the member for Waterford and the Labor opposition, they had over 10 years in government to—

Mr O'Connor interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr J Kelly): Member for Bonney, you need to be in your own seat if you want to participate.

Dr ROWAN:—pursue a number of issues, which they failed to do. The hypocrisy that comes from those opposite is just extraordinary, but I will get back to that a little later. This legislation continues the Crisafulli Liberal National Party state government's work to strengthen community safety, improve the administration of justice and ensure Queensland's laws respond to the challenges confronting our communities. In addressing this legislation, I particularly want to acknowledge the measures to deter metal theft and disrupt the sale and disposal of stolen metal through the scrap metal industry, and these are practical reforms addressing criminal conduct that can have significant consequences far beyond the value of the material stolen.

The theft of copper wiring from electricity infrastructure, road lighting or community facilities can leave essential services disrupted, expose workers and the public to danger and generate substantial repair costs. A criminal seeking a quick financial return can cause damage that takes considerable time and public resources to rectify, and these costs are ultimately borne by households, businesses, community organisations and Queensland taxpayers. Local residents have raised with me their concerns about increasing metal and copper theft, particularly across the western suburbs of Brisbane and Ipswich. Their concerns extend to the implications for critical infrastructure and essential services including energy infrastructure and road lighting. Residents rightly expect that the infrastructure supporting their daily lives will be protected and that deliberate interference with these assets will attract meaningful consequences.

When road lighting is damaged or removed, there are implications for motorists, pedestrians and other road users. When electrical infrastructure is damaged, the consequences can include service interruptions and serious safety hazards, and these concerns deserve a legislative response that recognises the full extent of the harm caused. This legislation strengthens penalties for offending involving metal, including circumstances where public infrastructure is disrupted or lives and health are endangered. It also introduces new offences addressing conduct associated with metal theft, strengthening the capacity to intervene and hold offenders accountable.

Importantly, this legislation addresses those criminals who seek to profit from stolen material. Stronger identification requirements and the recording of all scrap metal transactions will improve traceability and assist with investigations. Increased penalties will also apply to relevant unlawful conduct by dealers, including repeated failures to report suspected stolen scrap metal to police. It must

be noted that legitimate recycling businesses perform an important economic and environmental function. A more accountable framework will support responsible operators while making it harder for stolen material to enter the market.

The former Labor state government had the findings of a parliamentary inquiry into scrap metal theft in November 2023, so I come back to the member for Waterford. Those opposite failed to act at that time. They had the information. They could have acted into 2024 but they failed to do so, and that is why there is hypocrisy from those opposite when they contribute to this debate and their legacy of failing to address this issue when they had the information at the time. However, the Liberal National Party government is now acting to deal with this significant issue. Despite acknowledging the problem and responding to that inquiry, Labor did not deliver the legislative changes now being progressed by the Crisafulli Liberal National Party state government. Queenslanders needed action to protect infrastructure, strengthen accountability and disrupt the financial incentive driving this offending. The Crisafulli Liberal National Party state government is delivering that action. This legislation reflects our broader commitment to restoring community safety through stronger laws, support for police and a justice system that recognises the rights and interests of victims.

We understand there is further work to do. The responsibility requires sustained effort and a willingness to address specific problems affecting Queensland communities. Effective prevention also depends on cooperation between government, police, industry and the community. I certainly acknowledge the efforts of Crime Stoppers Queensland working collaboratively with local governments including the Brisbane City Council to combat copper theft. Their work promotes awareness of suspicious activity around electrical infrastructure and community facilities and encourages people to provide information that can assist police. Community reporting can help identify offending, support investigations and prevent further damage. It is important to complement the legislative measures before the House with such strategies as well.

I also acknowledge the contribution of local community safety groups including Neighbourhood Watch. In my own electorate of Moggill, the 4070 Bellbowrie Neighbourhood Watch group consistently promotes important messages from Crime Stoppers Queensland and the Queensland Police Service. By sharing timely information, encouraging vigilance and keeping residents engaged, these volunteers help strengthen community awareness and support crime prevention. I certainly thank them for their ongoing commitment to the safety of our local community. I know that there are many Neighbourhood Watch groups right across Queensland in various electorates that are doing similar work as well.

This legislation makes important improvements to the wider justice system. The coronial reforms will support more effective use of resources and improve the operation of a system that carries significant responsibilities for bereaved families and the wider community. Stronger penalties for stock offences recognise the serious financial and operational consequences that this offending can have for Queensland's primary producers. I know that the minister for agriculture in Queensland has mentioned that previously and has been undertaking important work, along with the Minister for Police.

These measures demonstrate the importance of maintaining laws that remain responsive to the needs of Queenslanders. The Crisafulli LNP state government is listening to community concerns about delivering practical reforms. We are strengthening consequences for offenders, making it harder to profit from stolen metal and supporting the protection of essential infrastructure. For residents across the electorate of Moggill, the western suburbs of Brisbane and Ipswich, these are important steps towards safer communities and more secure services.

Finally, I commend the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity, the Hon. Deb Frecklington, for bringing this legislation to the Queensland parliament. She undertakes her responsibilities to this parliament and her responsibilities as a minister very seriously. She has progressed this legislation and developed it in the interests of the community. There has also been important work undertaken with respect to scrutiny by the relevant parliamentary committee. I acknowledge members on both sides of the House for undertaking that work. I commend this legislation to the House.