




Speech By
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EXPANDING ADULT CRIME, ADULT TIME AND TAKING A STRONG STANCE ON DRUGS AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LEE** (Hervey Bay—LNP) (8.30 pm): I rise to speak to the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026. The Crisafulli government is making Queensland safer by calmly and methodically restoring safety to Hervey Bay. Our Making Queensland Safer Laws were a key election commitment and my Hervey Bay community has backed us in. Labor weakened our youth justice laws by removing detention as a last resort, abolishing breach of bail as an offence, closing the Childrens Court to victims and families and making a youth offender's criminal history inadmissible in determining an offender's sentence. Labor by implication progressively disempowered and diminished the substantive rights of victims of crime. Ernest Hemingway has famously described the process of going bankrupt as happening two ways: gradually, then suddenly. A decade of Labor's gradual, ideological and systemic dismantling of the youth justice system unsurprisingly and suddenly gave rise to a youth crime crisis.

According to a 2024 Queensland Audit Office report, there was a 64 per cent increase in the average daily number of serious repeat offenders from 2019. In contrast, under the Crisafulli government, the number of serious repeat offenders has now decreased an astonishing 17 per cent. Furthermore, there was a 193 per cent increase in youth crime over Labor's decade of decline. In stark contrast, the Crisafulli government in just 18 months has reduced the number of youth crime victims by 7.2 per cent.

In Hervey Bay small businesses were vandalised whilst young offenders celebrated their crimes on social media; a youngster was assaulted with a machete and an elderly couple experienced a terrifying home invasion. So much for Labor's slick and deceptive slogan of 'keeping us safe and strong'! Meanwhile, as youth crime intensified, the former Labor member for Hervey Bay was whisked off by his Labor minders into witness protection where he remained for his entire term. When it comes to speaking up for the rights of victims of crime, Labor's silence was and is resoundingly deafening. On this side of the House we are slowly and methodically reforming the youth justice system and lazy Labor had better get used to it.

The objective of this bill is to amend the Youth Justice Act 1992 to prescribe new Adult Crime, Adult Time offences; repeal Labor's botched three-strike police drug diversion program and introduce a new illicit drug enforcement and diversion framework; and, finally, introduce new and expanded police powers within prescribed designated business and community precincts. Whenever the Crisafulli government speaks of strengthening the youth justice laws we also articulate the importance of early intervention. Indeed, we are investing \$560 million to stop crime before it starts. The member for Maryborough and I have tirelessly advocated for state government funding for Fraser Coast youth intervention programs. We are delighted that the Susan River Operation Hard Yakka and Smithery Next Man Up programs are to receive state government funding. It is an inspiring change after Labor cut the funding to these types of programs.

This amendment bill inserts 12 new offences, as recommended by the Expert Legal Panel, into section 175A of the Youth Justice Act. They include offences like riot, indecent treatment of children under 16, abuse of persons with an impairment of the mind, endangering the safety of a person in a vehicle with intent, conspiring to murder and assault occasioning bodily harm. The bill proposes to increase the penalties for young offenders who commit prescribed offences—that is, serious offences that cause significant harm to victims. On this side of the House we make no apologies for prioritising the rights of victims over serious repeat offenders.

In turning to the introduction of the new illicit drug enforcement and diversion framework, the Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support, Hon. Laura Gerber, in her introductory speech said—

This is about restoring accountability and sending a clear message that drug offending will not be ignored. We will not stand by and allow crime to be normalised in our parks, near our schools or in our shopping centres.

Hervey Bay is not immune to the scourge of illicit drugs. It is a blight on our suburban streets, parks and shopping centres. The Crisafulli government's well-considered illicit drug enforcement and diversion program narrows drug diversion to first-time low-risk individuals through two distinct pathways: for a minor cannabis offence or a minor drug offence. The framework empowers police officers with the ability to offer eligible persons in possession of a minor amount of cannabis an opportunity to participate in a drug diversion program as an alternative to criminal proceedings. In relation to minor drug offences, a police officer will have a discretion to issue a penalty infringement notice, a PIN. An offender will then be provided with the opportunity to self-select to complete a drug diversion program in lieu of paying the PIN. The eligibility criteria restricts an offender to one diversionary opportunity under each pathway. We have an excellent drug diversion program in Hervey Bay. Bayside Transformations drug and alcohol recovery centre has a strong and enduring record in turning lives around.

Finally, the Crisafulli government is introducing new and expanded police powers within prescribed designated business and community precincts. This bill is about taking a strong stance on drugs and antisocial behaviour by establishing a framework for the minister to prescribe a designated business and community precinct. Like the safe night precinct in the Liquor Act 1992, this framework will provide the police with strengthened powers to deter, detect and respond to antisocial behaviour in designated precincts and maintain community safety. The bill empowers a police officer to give a direction of up to 24 hours to a person or group of persons in certain circumstances pursuant to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000. Furthermore, a police officer may issue a banning notice of one month, unless extended, to a person where they have behaved in a disorderly, offensive, threatening or violent way and the person's ongoing presence poses an unacceptable risk of causing violence, impacting the safety of others or disrupting or interfering with the reasonable use and enjoyment of a stated area. The bill also amends the Jack's Law framework to allow police officers the power to use handheld scanners without a warrant, removing the requirement for senior officer approval.

Before closing, I want to acknowledge our hardworking Hervey Bay Queensland Police Service personnel. They do a fantastic job in keeping our community safe. Let's be frank: Queensland Labor weakened the youth justice laws in 2015 and Labor's chaotic policy on the run was writ large in announcing a five-point plan in 2016, a four-point plan in 2019, a five-point plan in 2020 and a 10-point plan in 2022. Labor is soft on crime, Labor is soft on drugs and Labor is soft on standing up for the rights of victims. We on this side of the House are restoring safety in the home and community with well-considered and methodical legislative reform. We are recalibrating the scales of Lady Justice to ensure that the rights of victims are prioritised. I commend the bill to the House.