



Speech By
Hon. Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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

Introduction

 **Hon. LJ GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.04 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Drugs Misuse Act 1986, the Drugs Misuse Regulation 1987, the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Regulation 2012, the State Penalties Enforcement Act 1999, the State Penalties Enforcement Regulation 2014, the Youth Justice Act 1992 and the legislation mentioned in schedule 1 for particular purposes. I table the bill, the explanatory notes and a statement of compatibility with human rights. I nominate the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026 [249](#).

Tabled paper: Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026, explanatory notes [250](#).

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I am proud to introduce the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill. This bill is about protecting Queenslanders. It is about their right to feel safe in their homes, in their workplaces and in their communities, and it is about delivering fewer victims of crime in this state. The Crisafulli government was elected with a clear mandate to restore safety where you live and ensure there are consequences for actions. That is exactly what we are delivering. This bill strengthens community safety in three strong and decisive ways. First, it strengthens our tough Adult Crime, Adult Time laws, expanding the scope by 12 serious offences and ensuring that serious crimes attract serious consequences. Second, it scraps Labor's failed drug diversion policy which saw thousands of repeat drug offenders walk away without facing consequences for their actions. Third, it promotes community safety in designated business and community precincts, giving our police the tools they need to restore safety to our shopping centres, community hubs and business districts. These reforms are about making our communities safer, because Queenslanders deserve to feel safe and they expect that if a crime is committed the offender is held to account. That is what Queenslanders voted for and that is exactly what we are delivering after a decade of decline from those opposite.

I will turn first to the part of the bill expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time. For 10 years, Labor loudly and proudly weakened our youth crime laws. They made detention a last resort, removed breach of bail as an offence and created a generation of serious hardcore repeat youth offenders. The decisions Labor made had real-world consequences. They meant courts were constrained, consequences for actions were missing from the youth justice system and victims and their families were left unseen and unprotected. Year after year Queenslanders called for change as youth crime escalated and victim

numbers skyrocketed. Under Labor's decade of decline, victims of crime increased 193 per cent. Car thefts surged, break-ins climbed, robberies rose and rape and attempted rape increased by more than 90 per cent. Between 2018 and 2023, the average daily number of serious repeat youth offenders increased by 64 per cent. What did those opposite do? Labor sat back and watched the numbers grow, all the while weakening youth crime laws, putting the rights of offenders before the rights of victims. Queenslanders demanded change and the Crisafulli government listened. We promised to put victims first, to restore safety where you live and to ensure there are consequences for actions, and that is exactly what we are delivering.

In December 2024, the Crisafulli government introduced the Making Queensland Safer Laws. Those laws ensure that detention is no longer a last resort for youth offenders, that the impact on victims is a primary consideration during sentencing and that there are consequences for actions. Those laws introduced the first tranche of Adult Crime, Adult Time, making youth offenders liable to the same maximum, minimum and mandatory penalties as adults for 13 serious offences. That was the first step in turning the tide on Labor's youth crime crisis.

Since introducing our Making Queensland Safer Laws, more than 4,000 youth have been charged with over 19,000 offences under Adult Crime, Adult Time. Under our tough laws, youth offenders are now facing serious consequences for their actions. It is still early days and we are coming off an extremely high base, but already we have seen fewer victims of crime, with a 7.2 per cent drop in victim numbers across the state. We have seen fewer youth becoming serious repeat offenders, with a 17 per cent drop in serious repeat offenders, and proven Adult Crime, Adult Time offences have fallen by more than a quarter, with a 27 per cent drop. These results show that we are starting to turn the tide on Labor's youth crime crisis, but we know the job is not done and we will not stop strengthening our youth crime laws until Queenslanders feel safe in their own homes and there are fewer victims of crime in this state.

Judges and magistrates have described Adult Crime, Adult Time as a clear signal from the government that serious youth offending must now be treated with the seriousness it warrants. To quote some sentencing remarks for youth offenders charged under Adult Crime, Adult Time, magistrates and judges have said: 'This sentence is going to be different, because the laws have changed'; 'The court needs to sentence you in a way that meets what we call community expectations, and that means the community is sending you a message that this will not be tolerated'; and 'You've got to understand that the world has changed—and you have to change unless you like the idea of being in custody for a long part of your life.' Youth offenders are hearing the message loud and clear: if they commit an adult crime then they will face adult time, and the reduction in proven Adult Crime, Adult Time offences backs this up.

However, the work is not done. As promised, we established the Expert Legal Panel to provide advice on crimes that should be included as Adult Crime, Adult Time offences, and in 2025 the Crisafulli government added an additional 20 serious offences. The Expert Legal Panel was appointed for 12 months, with their term ending on 11 February 2026, and their advice will be released as part of the committee process. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the members of the panel for their careful, independent and considered advice over that time.

Over the past year the panel has undertaken a thorough and detailed examination of the offences that were referred to them for consideration to be included as part of Adult Crime, Adult Time offending. In providing their advice, the panel considered the level of harm, the seriousness of the offence, whether the offence involved the use of violence or was likely to create conditions in which serious harm may be caused, the impact of these crimes on victims and the broader risk to community safety. The Expert Legal Panel has laid the foundations for our strong laws and, make no mistake, our work is not done. We will continue to build on these foundations and strengthen our youth crime laws and if more changes are needed then they will be made. The 12 serious offences contained in this bill are crimes no Queenslanders should ever have to experience. They involve conduct that is violent, calculated and deeply damaging.

This bill makes the following offences under Adult Crime, Adult Time:

- section 61(1)—Riot, if the circumstance stated in paragraph (a) of the penalty applies where an offender causes grievous bodily harm to a person, causes an explosive substance to explode, or destroys or starts to destroy a building, vehicle or machinery;
- section 210(3)—Indecent treatment of a child, if the child is under the age of 12 years, or section 210(4A), if the child is a person with an impairment of the mind;

- section 216—Abuse of persons with an impairment of the mind;
- section 309—Conspiring to murder;
- section 311—Aiding suicide;
- section 315—Disabling in order to commit an indictable offence;
- section 315A—Choking, suffocation or strangulation in a domestic setting;
- section 316—Stupefying in order to commit an indictable offence;
- section 319—Endangering the safety of a person in a vehicle with intent;
- section 322(a)—Administering poison with intent to harm, if the poison endangers the life of or does grievous bodily harm to the person;
- section 339(2)—Assaults occasioning bodily harm, if the offender publishes material on a social media platform or, under section 339(3), pretends to be armed with a dangerous or offensive weapon or is in the company of others, or, under section 339(5), if the offender commits the offence with one of the circumstances of aggravation in subsection (2) or (3) and the circumstance of aggravation stated in section 52B applies; and
- section 359E—Unlawful stalking, intimidation, harassment or abuse.

These are serious crimes. They involve planned and coordinated violence, the exploitation of children and vulnerable individuals, the deliberate incapacitation of victims in order to commit further harm and strangulation by a person you are supposed to be able to trust. These offences can leave victims physically harmed, psychologically traumatised and, in some cases, fighting for their lives. If a youth commits one of these offences, they must face serious consequences. If a youth conspires to murder, disables someone to commit an indictable offence or strangles a partner in a domestic setting then the law should reflect the seriousness of that crime. We will not wait until a child is violated. We will not wait until someone is targeted in a planned conspiracy to take their life. If a youth chokes, suffocates or strangles someone in a domestic setting, the law will treat their conduct with the seriousness it warrants.

We are taking action now because we stand on the side of victims. We make no apology for doing what needs to be done to make Queensland safer, ensuring there are consequences for actions and fewer victims of crime. If a youth commits a serious adult crime then they will face adult time. If a youth offender drugs or stupefies in order to commit an indictable offence or disables a person in order to commit an indictable offence then the consequence must reflect the severity of their actions and the seriousness of that harm.

Queenslanders also expect the law to protect our most vulnerable. That is why indecent treatment of a child under 12 and indecent treatment of a child with an impairment of the mind are included in this bill. Where a youth sexually touches or exploits a vulnerable child or person, the law must protect that victim and hold the offender to account.

The Expert Legal Panel also gave consideration to the application of sections 535, 536, 538 and 545 of the Criminal Code to the Youth Justice Act and considered that they applied. Accordingly, this bill expands Adult Crime, Adult Time to include the general attempts, including the simpliciter offence of attempted robbery, as well as other offences of conspiring to commit an Adult Crime, Adult Time offence and being an accessory after the fact to an Adult Crime, Adult Time offence. This codifies the Expert Legal Panel's advice, recognises the potential harm caused to victims by these offences and acknowledges that simply because an attempt was unsuccessful does not lessen the significance of the offending for the victims of such crimes.

Whenever we have spoken about strong laws, we have also always committed to delivering early intervention and rehabilitation. That is why we are delivering the largest investment in early intervention, crime prevention and rehabilitation programs in Queensland's history, with a \$560 million commitment to stop youth reoffending and help turn young lives around. We have already delivered two rounds of grants for our \$50 million Kickstarter early intervention initiative, with new programs up and running right across the state targeting at-risk youth showing early signs of disengagement, antisocial or criminal behaviour to help them turn their lives away from crime and reconnect with education, training or a job.

We know that the best way to stop crime is to intervene early, and that is why we are also delivering our Regional Reset program in nine locations across the state. The Regional Reset program includes a short-stay reset and intensive mentoring to help at-risk youth re-engage in education and the

community. It gives youth the opportunity to hit the reset button and be placed into a structured, disciplined environment that gives them the tools and support they need to turn their life around so they can make better choices.

We are also delivering \$50 million for four crime prevention schools across the state and \$40 million for two specialised youth justice schools that are designed to get disengaged and high-risk youth away from crime and into education or employment. This is about preventing crime before it happens and intervening before kids become serious repeat criminals. For youth who commit serious crimes there are consequences, and this bill ensures that. However, there is also rehabilitation. Every youth offender in Queensland's detention centres will have access to Staying on Track, which is 12 months of intensive rehabilitation to break the cycle of crime and prevent them from reoffending.

This bill also restores common sense to Queensland's drug laws. In April 2023, those opposite came into this House and weakened Queensland's drug laws. They removed consequences for drug offending and replaced them with a system that allowed repeated offending without accountability. Let us be clear about what that actually meant in practice. Under Labor's three-tier diversion scheme, on the first occasion an offender was found in possession of illicit drugs police were required to issue a warning—no discretion. They were ordered to let them go with a warning and without any accountability for their actions. Under Labor, on the second occasion police were required to refer the offender to a drug assessment program. Under Labor, on the third occasion, again, there were no consequences for actions but another diversion and another referral to a drug assessment program. Even after that, under the previous Labor government an offender could still access court ordered diversions. That meant that, under the previous Labor government, an individual could be caught with dangerous drugs on up to five occasions before facing any kind of penalty or punishment.

It does not end there. Labor also expanded the types of drugs to which this three-tier, get-out-of-jail program could apply. It would no longer be limited to just cannabis. Instead, Labor expanded their approach to include all schedule 1 and schedule 2 drugs, which are drugs such as methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, ketamine, MDMA and GHB.

While those opposite may suggest that weakening Queensland's drug laws is a 'good progressive Labor policy'—and that is exactly what they said when they came into this House and made Queensland less safe—that could not be further from the truth. There is nothing good about weakening our laws because illicit drug use is not a victimless crime. We will not stand by and let illicit drug use destroy someone's life. We know it can lead to addiction, an overdose and mental health issues. It can lead to drug induced cardiac conditions, chronic liver disease and long-term neurological harm.

In 2023 alone, Queensland recorded 310 unintentional drug induced deaths. Last year, more than 1,100 Queenslanders were admitted to public hospitals for illicit drug poisoning. This is not harmless behaviour. It affects not only the drug user but also the community. These are hard drugs and they can devastate communities. They are linked to organised crime, to property offending and to domestic and family violence. These are the drugs that fuel violence. Under Labor's model, so long as an offender said those drugs were for personal use, the ability for police to use their discretion to lay charges and commence court proceedings—commence consequences—was removed.

The Crisafulli government made a commitment to Queenslanders that we would restore safety where you live, and that is exactly what we are doing. This bill repeals Labor's three-tier drug diversion scheme and replaces it with the targeted Illicit Drug Enforcement and Diversion Framework. Under our framework, diversions are limited to first-time, low-risk offenders. This means, for minor cannabis possession—not more than 50 grams—an eligible first-time offender can be offered a single opportunity to complete a diversion program. One opportunity—that is it.

For first-time offenders in possession of small quantities of other dangerous drugs, police will have the discretion to issue a penalty infringement notice. That notice carries a financial consequence, and an offender may choose to either complete a drug assessment program or pay the fine. The fine will only be waived if the offender successfully completes that drug assessment program. However, importantly, if they offend again, they will be charged and they will be prosecuted because when a government allows repeat drug offending without consequence it does not reduce crime; it facilitates it. We will not wait for that drug use to ruin someone else's life.

This is about protecting victims of drug-fuelled violence. Too often it is the family living with violence that is impacted, or the elderly couple who have had their home broken into, or the woman experiencing domestic violence fuelled by methamphetamine use. This is about protecting the children who are exposed to parental drug use and intervening early before they become known to the child protection and youth justice systems.

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.

This bill is also about making business and community precincts safer—for the bakeries that open at 5 am, the chemists that know their customers by name, the newsagents, the hairdressers, the family-run cafes and all of the businesses and community areas in between. Too often, these places have been plagued by antisocial behaviour. Business owners are locking their doors during business hours, staff are having to clean urine and faeces from their shopfronts before they can even open their doors and customers are avoiding entire precincts, afraid of being harassed, abused or assaulted. That is not acceptable to Queenslanders, and it is not acceptable to us.

In places like Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and Maryborough, the Crisafulli government has brought together business owners, residents, police and local councils to hear firsthand about the impact of antisocial behaviour on their communities. These forums were about listening to locals, understanding the problem and working with them on the ground to find real solutions.

Across Queensland, the Crisafulli government has already backed our police with high-visibility patrols, targeted operations and crackdowns in business districts and town centres where, under the former Labor government, antisocial behaviour was allowed to fester. Police have made arrests for public nuisance, assault, drug possession and stealing. Weapons have been seized and repeat offenders have been held to account. We know that boots on the ground and police patrols are only part of the solution, and that to be able to make a meaningful impact in these communities our police need targeted powers. This bill takes a strong stance against antisocial behaviour and establishes designated business and community precincts. These precincts will be declared by regulation, in consultation with local government, where it is necessary to enhance public safety or public amenity, reduce antisocial behaviour occurring or reduce or prevent disruption in the area.

In a designated precinct, where a person behaves in a disorderly, offensive, threatening or violent way, whether that be assaulting someone, threatening damage, stealing from a shop, unlawfully possessing a weapon, using drugs in a public place or engaging in other offensive conduct, police will have the power to direct that person to leave and not return for up to 24 hours. If they return and breach the move-on direction, police will have the power to issue a banning notice excluding them from that precinct for a month. If they breach that banning notice, that is a criminal offence.

The bill also provides police the discretion to issue a banning notice to a youth, where appropriate, in the circumstances. This supports police to respond to youth behaving in a disorderly or violent manner or posing an unacceptable risk to the safety of a relevant public place, in the same way as adults, recognising this behaviour is equally disruptive whether it is committed by a youth or an adult. Police banning notices will act as an enforcement tool for police to prevent further youth offending. To provide appropriate safeguards, police must explain the conditions of the banning notice to the youth, ensuring they fully understand the requirements of the banning notice and the consequences of breaching that notice. Police must also provide a copy of the banning notice to a parent, guardian or, where the youth is in the custody of the state, the chief executive, unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so. Let me be very clear: this is not intended to limit the ability of police to immediately issue that banning notice where it is necessary to address community safety concerns. Section 602J of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act will apply to any banning notice issued which allows the recipient of the banning notice to enter the precinct where it is necessary for their residence, employment or education.

By strengthening police powers, the Crisafulli government is putting community safety first, protecting families in business and community precincts and backing small and family businesses. Jack's Law will also apply in these precincts, enabling police to conduct wandering operations to detect knives and other weapons.

This bill ensures our hardworking, frontline police officers have the tools they need to act early, interrupt disorderly behaviour and restore safety where you live. This bill is the Crisafulli government delivering strong new laws to protect Queenslanders, to ensure there are consequences for actions, to restore safety where you live and to ensure there are fewer victims of crime in this state.

First Reading

Hon. LJ GERBER (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services) (3.27 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee.