




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR THEODORE

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YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (12.44 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. Youth justice is a complex issue, and understanding the root cause of why individuals reoffend can be difficult to surmise and treat. It should be noted that only a small percentage of young people caught in the youth justice system reoffend. There has been much research and study into developmental disorders of people in detention. Many of these disorders stem from the environment to which these individuals were subjected in the early development of their lives and in childhood.

It is no surprise that 70 per cent of young people known to the youth justice system are also known to child protection. It should also be noted that not all of these individuals have typical disorders in learning and communication. Therefore, it is important to look beyond philosophy to see what worked in the past and what previous methods failed to achieve suitable outcomes.

Whilst most perpetrators are victims of the negative environment in which they developed, it is the innocent individuals going about their daily lives who end up becoming the next victim. No matter where we live, youth crime is skyrocketing—robberies up 128 per cent, armed robberies up 88 per cent, assaults up 33 per cent, serious assaults up 31 per cent, unlawful use of motor vehicles up 49 per cent and unlawful entry up 34 per cent. Unfortunately, the Gold Coast is not immune. A *Gold Coast Bulletin* article dated 21 August 2019 is titled 'Car thefts on Gold Coast double in five years thanks to youth offenders and opportunistic thieves'. Another article is titled 'Teen pulled off roof, three more in custody after police track stolen car through Southport'. Another article is titled 'Frustrations grow for police as juvenile offenders get "slap on the wrist" at Southport Children's Court'. These articles go on and on. Therefore, failing to address the situation will only see this malicious cycle continue and place others in harm's way.

The objectives of the bill are: to reduce the period in which proceedings in a youth justice system are finalised; to remove the legislative barriers to enable more young people to be granted bail; and to ensure appropriate conditions are attached to grants of bail. Other amendments introduce a new information-sharing regime to assist government and non-government organisations to assess and respond to the needs of the young people in the youth justice system, authorise the use of body worn cameras and capture audio recordings through closed circuit television. This is something with which I wholeheartedly agree and with which many police officers in my region and carers in facilities agree.

I have concerns about the bail provisions. Bail is a privilege that society grants an individual as a sign of goodwill. It is not and should never be an expectation. Breaching what society grants us as a sign of good intention should never be tolerated; therefore, I wholeheartedly support the amendment of the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Toowoomba South.

We all agree that long stays in watch houses, especially for children, even down to the age of 10, are certainly not appropriate. On 10 May this year 89 children were held in overcrowded watch houses. There was even a report that a child was held for 45 days in one of these facilities. There are some in

our society who claim that we must refrain from punishment and other deterrents as they are counterproductive, yet this philosophy itself could be counterproductive. The fear of punishment and the hope of reward in the form of meaningful inclusion in society must go together as one. On their own they are meaningless.

Going forward, we must ensure that those who are caring for these individuals are obtaining the necessary support and qualifications yet have practical skills in dealing with situations when they arise. Placing high-needs youth in environments with carers who lack the necessary skills is a recipe for disaster and only further drains resources from our already stretched police and justice systems.

In conclusion, will this bill impact our current societal problem of youth crime without a systemic and cultural change to how the department manages the needs of these young people? Without proper amendments, unfortunately I fear it will not.