



Speech by

# GORDON NUTTALL

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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## CORRECTIVE SERVICES AND PENALTIES AND SENTENCES AMENDMENT BILL

**Mr NUTTALL** (Sandgate—ALP) (10.18 p.m.): In terms of this debate, I honestly do not believe that there are fundamental differences in the way in which people in our community in general regard terms of punishment, regardless of which side of politics they support. In my view, it is the term of the punishment and how that punishment is served that is the real crux of this debate tonight.

In his second-reading speech, the shadow Attorney-General indicated that, when the National/Liberal Party coalition was in Government, they significantly increased to 80% the time to be served for custodial sentences. What has really changed in the three years since that legislation was introduced? Remembering that the Opposition was in Government for 32 years, what has happened in three short years to make the Opposition feel that it has to increase sentences from 80% to 100%?

**Opposition members:** Public opinion.

**Mr NUTTALL:** The interjectors just say "public opinion". I do not accept that in three short years public opinion has said that we have increased it to 80% and now we have to increase it to 100%. On that argument, the next logical step for the Opposition, the next time it is in Government, is to say, "Public opinion says we have 100% and that is not enough, so we now have to have the death penalty." That is the next logical step. Eighty per cent was not enough and 100% is not enough, so the next step is the death penalty. That is the way that the argument is heading. Blind Freddy can see that.

Not one jurisdiction in the world that has had either the death penalty or truth in sentencing has been able to reduce the rate of crime. That is a reality of life. If we look——

**Mr Nelson** interjected.

**Mr Knuth** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Mickel): Order! The member for Tablelands! The member for Burdekin!

**Mr NUTTALL:** The reality is that if our society continues down this path, the next logical step is the death penalty. In my view and in the view of the majority of Australians, that is not the way that a civilised society should be heading.

Like many members in this Parliament, deputations of constituents have come to my office and said that they are the victims of crime or they have family members who are the victims of crime, and they do not believe that the sentence that has been imposed upon the perpetrator of the crime has been severe enough. I cannot say that they are right or wrong, because fortunately such things have not happened to me. This is an emotional issue, and people need to be aware of that. When a crime is perpetrated against a person, their emotions boil up and they want the severest penalty imposed on the criminal. There is nothing wrong with that and I am not arguing against it. I am arguing that the legislation does not solve the problem of crime. It does not stop people committing crime. Where is the solution?

The solution is not to put them in jail, throw away the key, put them in the electric chair and then bring on the next one.

**Mr Nelson:** Where's the solution?

**Mr NUTTALL:** That is not a solution because the crime will still occur. The member for Tablelands asks, "Where's the solution?" The solution is not to put people to death; the solution is to try

to find either the right rehabilitation or, probably more importantly, to build a society in which, from an early stage, people——

**Mr Nelson:** How many people have to die before you do something?

**Mr NUTTALL:** The member can wave those sorts of things in front of me every day. We all see that every day, but we also see a number of good things that are done every day in our society. You do not wave those in front of me, do you?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Sandgate will address his comments through the Chair.

**Mr NUTTALL:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I said, when one sits down and talks to the victims of crime or those who have been affected by crime, after the emotion has died down they will often say, "No, maybe they should not be put to death, but they need to be punished." No-one denies that people who commit crimes, especially serious violent crimes, should be punished. We all agree with that. But regardless of its length—whether it is 10 years, 12 years or 15 years—the sentence itself does not solve the problem of crime. What solves the problem is finding jobs, trying to give people worth and trying to create better communities. I like to think that all 89 members of this Parliament are here because we want a better quality of life for the people we represent. One does not achieve that by increasing punishment. One gets a better quality of life by giving people incentives and by giving people worth and value in their lives. As a Parliament, we need to try to find solutions to that problem. We must not stand here with a big heavy stick and say, "This is what we are going to do."

**Mr Littleproud:** You're strong on rhetoric, but not real strong on practicality.

**Mr NUTTALL:** Putting people in jail forever and a day is not a practical solution either. What does that cost society? Each and every one of us could give the hundreds of millions of dollars that we are pouring into the corrections system to a school, a hospital, a police station, a fire station, an ambulance station or any one of the many needy facilities in our electorates. Each and every one of us knows that we could put more money into those facilities, but the reality is that we just do not have the money.

**Mr Knuth** interjected.

**Mr NUTTALL:** I will come to that. The solution is not to keep pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into correctional centres so that we can throw more and more prisoners into jail. If our tax base does not go up, where does the money come from? It comes from our schools, hospitals and all the facilities that we really need to be spending money on. At the moment, our State Budget is approximately \$16.5 billion. As I have said on many occasions, one could spend that whole Budget in the area of health and it would not be enough; one could spend the whole Budget in the area of education and it would not be enough. Basically, we all agree that money should be spent on those areas; but, as we all know, we do not have a bottomless pit of money. It is the same with corrections; we do not have a bottomless pit of money. The solution is not to build more prisons, build more cells and simply throw people in jail and throw away the key.

The solution is to intervene in the early stages of a person's criminal development. The challenge for us as a society is to reach out to people in the early stages and to try to make family values more important, and most of us believe in strong family values. Because that is hard, does that mean we should walk away from it? I do not think so. To take an example, six or seven years ago the road toll in Queensland was somewhere in the 400 to 500 bracket, which was an appalling blight on the State. Through hard work, determination and the implementation of programs, we have managed to reduce that road toll to approximately 275. Why could not the same logic be applied to the law-breaking citizens of the State? Why can we not focus on that instead of focusing on legislation that does nothing to assist the issue? It does nothing to help it.

**Mr Springborg:** Two—we're doing both.

**Mr NUTTALL:** We are not doing both, not by this legislation. The legislation does not give the alternatives. The shadow Attorney-General's legislation says that we are going to increase sentences from 80% to 100%, that we are going to throw away the key and that prisoners have to serve their full time. None of us here are judges.

**Mrs Pratt:** We know right from wrong.

**Mr NUTTALL:** We do know right from wrong; I agree with that. However, we do not know the particulars of a case before a judge. I have faith in the judges, and the shadow Attorney-General should have faith in the judges. I am sure that he does. We have to rely on their good judgment. They are put there because of their expertise and their experience. One would hope that judges impose jail sentences to fit the crimes, and I am sure that in most cases they do that.

I do not think that any judge who sits on the bench and listens to all of those awful court cases would say, "I do not really care. I will give this person a lenient sentence." They are humans just like you

and I. I honestly do not believe that they do that. I think that they try to impose the sentence that they deem fit.

This legislation does not help us as a society. It is bad legislation. It is legislation that should not be supported. The legislation that we should be debating is legislation that will help us reduce crime, not increase crime.

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