



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Hansard 4 March 1999

POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AMENDMENT BILL

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (12.52 p.m.): My contribution to this debate will be reasonably brief. I just want to make some comments about juvenile justice and the difficulties that we as a society have in dealing with juvenile crime. The Childrens Court in its annual report over the past couple of years has emphasised in particular the need for juveniles' parents to accompany them when they appear before the court. I have to say that I support that concept. In many cases one of the reasons juvenile crime exists is because of the lack of care and concern shown by some parents. I am not saying that that applies to all juvenile offenders, but certainly some kids are on the bad track simply because their parents are not concerned enough about the whereabouts or the welfare of their children. Obviously, that is a disappointment for us as a society.

I endorse wholeheartedly the views of the Childrens Court judge who said that parents should be there and should be held accountable. A lot of people say that parents should be held responsible for restitution of the damage that juveniles cause in our communities. While that sounds good, the practicalities are not so easy. A number of families simply do not have the money to be able to pay for damage caused by juveniles. I do not think there is any one particular easy answer in terms of addressing the issues of juvenile crime.

Within my electorate we have an organisation called Jabiru, which is partly funded by the Department of Families. One of its roles is to look after young people who perhaps need a bit of guidance and a bit of support. It does an incredibly good job within my electorate. The people involved with that organisation are very committed to the young people within my electorate. I really believe that, to a large degree, it is because of their hard work that we in the electorate of Sandgate are fortunate that juvenile crime is probably nowhere near as bad, I would have to say, as it is in a lot of other parts of Brisbane.

The difficulty with Bills such as this one before the House is that we tend to just focus on the negatives of youth. I think that it is important that we remember that the majority of the young people within our society—the vast majority of young people within our society—make a valuable contribution to our communities. We should not lose sight of that fact. In this Bill, we are talking about only a very, very small minority. I often worry about this type of debate because we tend not to focus on the good in our community and the youth within our community and their worth.

Most of us who attend our secondary schools and look at the calibre and the quality of our youth today would have to say that they are educated to a higher standard and are far more articulate than schoolchildren were when I was at school. I want to take the opportunity to really applaud the youth of our society not just for the work that they do in our community, but in terms of their own self-esteem and their own worth. When we look at our young people, we realise that we as a nation have a lot to look forward to.

The Bill itself simply brings things into balance and allows the police to arrest people when they need to. It is a Bill that really is not very controversial. I am pleased to note that the Opposition and some other members on the other side of the Chamber are supporting the Bill before the House today.

Finally, I want to pass on some comments. There is a Juvenile Aid Bureau in my electorate. I know that those police officers work extremely hard, sometimes with very, very limited resources. That is simply because of budget constraints. They are to be congratulated, too, on the work that they do within my electorate. I have to say that I have never come across more dedicated police officers than

the ones within my electorate, particularly the ones who work in the area of juvenile aid. They are very responsive to the needs of the electorate. All in all, I think that they do a great job. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all members of the police force at Sandgate for the great work that they do within my electorate.
