



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

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POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AMENDMENT BILL

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (12.49 p.m.): I will be supporting this Bill as well. In the current climate, I think it is very important that police responsibilities and powers are outlined in as much detail as possible by Government to show the police that in their activities they have the support not only of the Legislative Assembly but also the community. I would like to raise a few points along the same lines as was done by the member for Nudgee.

I come from a police family. My father is a police officer in my home town. It seems to me that some of the most troublesome episodes we have in our local town are related to juvenile offenders. With respect to this whole situation, quite recently it was related to me that at the moment magistrates are using the concept of recording an offence against a juvenile offender as a punishment. That juvenile offender could therefore be appearing before the magistrate time and time again and having his offences not recorded until, finally, the magistrate will say that the offence is now recorded. As far as juvenile crime is concerned, as the member for Nudgee was saying, this is an important issue. It is a fact that we are not getting the message across to the youth of our community that there are responsibilities for their actions and that with their rights as citizens come responsibilities.

Although the member for Nudgee will disagree with me on this, and say that the Juvenile Justice Act covers this point, the police and the community have long had a lot of trouble in dealing with juvenile offenders because of their ability to act, considering that the juvenile who is offending would not consider an appearance before a magistrate to be a particularly demeaning step for him to take, nor would he consider it a punishment.

As well as these amendments being passed, in the future I would like to see us—and I know this might not sit too well with some of the policies that we hear expounded in this Parliament—get a bit tougher on juvenile offenders. In a disciplined society one of the only things that we can do with a person who has shown that he is a recidivist and will not learn from the actions of the past is to punish him for the crimes that he commits. Especially in small communities, rural communities, where youth may not have a lot to do, have a lot of time on their hands or are contemplating a future of unemployment, this is where we need to be stamping out this sort of activity at the base level. Again, if we can stop juveniles from committing these offences at a young age, we might be able to do something to prevent their going on to become more serious violent offenders in the future.

We were talking last night about solutions for crime. This is one area where we really need some solutions. I repeat that I am supporting this Bill because I think it is a valuable move forward by giving police the ability to quickly stamp on these offenders at a young age and show them the errors of their ways. I support the Bill.
