



Speech by

KEN TURNER

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Hansard 4 October 2000

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (10.36 p.m.): I believe that times have changed and that the increase in crime by children is getting out of hand. Regularly I am engaged in conversation with people upset that children are committing crimes and escaping any kind of punishment. This is being reflected in the attitude of our young people. They can flout the law, knowing full well there will be no real retribution.

Our present system virtually denies the right of parents to discipline their children. Children cannot even be punished at school. The worst punishment handed out is suspension. That certainly achieves nothing in the way of disciplining students: they play up and get rewarded with a holiday break from school. This system does nothing to instil honesty, discipline or social responsibility in our students. Teachers are continually complaining about the way they are treated by certain children in their charge. This situation has already got out of hand and needs to be addressed. Children must be able to be held responsible for their actions if the court finds they were aware of what they were doing in committing a criminal act.

I support the intent of this Bill. It would make 10 to 14 year olds more accountable. We can no longer assume that because of their age they do not know right from wrong. The Bill seeks to reverse the present rule by placing the onus on defendants to prove that they were not aware they were doing wrong. I believe the Bill should go further with this age group by also including the discretion to make parents responsible for their children's actions. I am very much a child's person, but allowing our children to get away with committing criminal acts in our society does not help them at all, and we do them no favours. However, sentences imposed should take into account the age of the child. I support the intent of the Bill.
