



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard 22 August 2002

JUVENILE JUSTICE AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (12.57 p.m.): The Juvenile Justice Amendment Bill 2002 will amend the Juvenile Justice Act and other legislation relevant to the juvenile justice system and will provide an improved, relevant cohesive legislative basis for the administration of juvenile justice in the state.

The bill implements the commitment made by this government to amend the Juvenile Justice Act so that the act provides a relevant, effective and balanced juvenile justice system. The bill responds to the challenges made by the commission of inquiry into the abuse of children in Queensland's institutions, commonly referred to as the Forde report, and to improve the treatment of young people held in youth detention. The bill implements those recommendations in the Forde report that require change to the Juvenile Justice Act. These amendments build on this government's commitment to respond to the Forde report, demonstrated by the pulling down of the blight that was the Sir Leslie Wilson Centre and its replacement with the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre.

The Beattie Labor government honours its promises and more proof of our commitment was patently clear in our recent state budget where funding for the Families Department went up 15.5 per cent to \$518 million. Families are crucial to the government's vision for Queensland's future. The importance of Queensland families to the government's vision for the future of our state is clearly visible in the 2002-03 budget as it shows that we will increase funding by over \$188 million over the next four years.

This commitment continues the determined efforts that we have made to make up for decades of neglect. The commitment has confirmed that families are a key Beattie government priority. The additional funding ensures that the government has now met its fiscal commitments which resulted from the Forde inquiry. We have also increased funding of \$3 million to support children and young people in care who have high or complex needs, and additional funding of \$2.8 million for the development and implementation of responsive placement options for out-of-home care.

The state's community conferencing program will be expanded to the Sunshine Coast. I have been actively lobbying for the introduction of community conferencing.

Ms Spence: You did a very good job of lobbying. Well done.

Mr CUMMINS: I thank the minister very much. It is great to see that the Minister for Families has heard the calls and recognised the need for the option on the Sunshine Coast. I sincerely thank her and the Treasurer on behalf of Sunshine Coast residents.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. till 2.30 p.m.

Debate, on motion of Mr Cummins, adjourned.

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (2.34 p.m.), continuing: Prior to lunch I was thanking the Minister for Families and Minister for Seniors for the funding of the community conferencing program, which will begin soon on the Sunshine Coast. This community conferencing program has proven to be highly effective in making young offenders face up to the consequences of their actions. It has also served to keep them out of the juvenile justice system. As it has worked in other areas, I have no doubt that it will also work on the Sunshine Coast.

All members would be well aware that the vast majority of our young adults and youth are excellent citizens. Indeed, they are often fine role models. I take this opportunity to mention a recent incident on the Sunshine Coast. A 16-year-old student, Justin Madden, from Buderim Siena Catholic College has shown what a quick-thinking young man he is. After a bus driver collapsed at the wheel, he forced his way through a bus load of terrified children to apply an emergency air brake and avert a crash. Justin said that he had been sitting near the back when he heard screams and thuds as a tree clipped the side of the bus. He could see that the driver had fallen out of his seat and that the bus was still moving. Despite having to leap over the driver's seat to apply the handbrake, Justin said he was very calm—because everyone else was doing his share of the screaming. The bus came to a halt just before a concrete streetlight pole. None of the students, aged 13 to 17, was injured, although many were in shock and later received counselling at the school. Siena College is in my electorate and we on the Sunshine Coast are very proud of Justin. He got a very good write-up in the *Courier-Mail*, which should be commended for that.

I will finish by singing the praises of yet another Sunshine Coast student. Shelly Thomson was Kawana's representative at the recent 2002 youth parliament. I seek leave to table a letter from Shelly, thanking both me and the parliament, along with a copy of her speeches.

Leave granted.

Mr CUMMINS: I had the pleasure and honour of occupying the Speaker's chair for a period of the youth parliament. It was, indeed, a satisfying experience. The vast majority of our youth are honourable and positive, and this ensures a good future for both Queensland and Australia. The students enjoyed the experience and acquitted themselves extremely well. They did a marvellous job in this chamber, trying to learn. Shelly stated—

I cannot thank you enough for choosing me to participate in this year's Youth Parliament. Before the Constitution Convention I had no knowledge of the political spectra, yet with these two events my interest in politics has grown immensely.

The Queensland Youth Parliament was an amazing experience and has opened up so many opportunities for me. The procedures learnt and issues discussed are valuable to me now and in the future. However, the people I met made the greatest impact. I have made firm contacts with people from all around Queensland, who can open so many more doors to me. I enjoyed the week and have my fingers crossed to return next year.

Again, I thank all those involved in that event.

I commend the minister for this very positive bill and for the immense amount of work that she has done to ensure that the Beattie Labor government will be remembered as a government that lifted families to another level. I commend bill to the House.