



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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JUVENILE CRIME

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (12.03 pm): Today an elderly Maroochydore man lives with the legacy of fear and injury caused by a juvenile offender who violently attacked him while he was on his early morning walk nearly 12 months ago. Despite the victim being hospitalised for three weeks over Christmas and struggling for months since to regain mobility, this young offender received only nine months probation and an order to pay \$300 in compensation.

Did the penalty work? Obviously not. The same offender has since continued on his life of uninhibited criminal activity with barely a wet lettuce leaf thrown at him after being caught by police and processed by the courts. In October this year this young offender was charged with robbery and granted bail. A month later he was fined for breaching bail and then, according to newspaper reports, given bail by a magistrate for yet another offence. Then a few days later he was charged with new offences and granted bail again.

However, my elderly constituent, who was the innocent victim of a brutal assault less than 12 months ago, lives with the ongoing fear of being attacked on the streets. He can read the newspaper reports that show evidence of his attacker having appeared before the courts at least three times since his attack for new offences and the offender continues to walk—on bail despite, according to reports, breaching bail conditions.

I am angry that, despite police efforts to catch offenders, the court's juvenile justice system is as weak as water and fails to deliver both appropriate penalties for violent crimes and intensive rehabilitation to re-educate offenders. The juvenile justice system is just a revolving door. This young offender is now being treated as an adult by the courts. The process of weak or ineffective penalties continues to apply under this Beattie Labor government.

Today in Queensland under the Beattie government the exploding adult criminal population is being built upon a failing juvenile justice system. The Sunshine Coast is one area that is bearing the brunt of this. Although I welcome the recently publicised police crackdown on street offences, much more is needed to fix the ailing system where juvenile offenders are not being deterred or reformed from a life of crime as they move into adulthood where their criminal activity only escalates.

We all know that the majority of kids are good kids, but there is something terribly wrong with the juvenile justice system when young offenders who commit violent crimes walk free with no real intervention to halt their socially destructive lifestyle. Today I am calling on the government to overhaul the juvenile justice system with a review of the penalties that are handed out, a review of the effectiveness of the current measures and with the need to investigate more intensive interventions.

I am not simplistically calling for more jail terms for all juvenile offenders, but there are times when that cannot be avoided, particularly when violence is involved. What I am asking for is that the penalties are appropriate for the crimes, that the community based rehabilitation of juvenile offenders is appropriately funded and that offenders, whether they are juveniles or adults, who breach their bail conditions face a real penalty for that breach.

I have had numerous complaints from frustrated police that people breaching bail conditions by continuing to offend on bail is making their thin blue line thinner and more frustrated. If bail conditions are breached by reoffending, there must be a tougher approach from this government, because to date we are seeing it let down the community, the police and the people who, appropriately dealt with, could potentially be rehabilitated.

I am also calling on the state government to improve the status of a victim's right to have a say at the trials of juveniles by way of victim impact statements. In the case of my elderly constituent who suffered a violent attack last year, he—like many others—did not have the opportunity to put forward a victim impact statement to the court. I am advised by the police minister that it is not normal practice for a victim impact statement to be made in cases dealt with by the Magistrates Court or the Children's Court. I believe that needs to change.

I support community conferencing—it is something that I lobby for—where juvenile offenders are brought face to face, where it is appropriate, with the person they have offended against. It is a program that works for people who have committed certain types of crime, but there are other issues with regard to victim impact statements that are not being brought before the courts. We must address appropriate measures for youth homelessness, drunkenness and juvenile crime. It requires a better answer than what we have seen to date from this government.

Time expired.