



Speech by

Vicky Darling

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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JUVENILE JUSTICE AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL; JUVENILE JUSTICE (SENTENCING PRINCIPLES) AMENDMENT BILL

Ms DARING (Sandgate—ALP) (9.15 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the cognate debate on the Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2009 and the Juvenile Justice (Sentencing Principles) Amendment Bill 2009. I rise to speak in support of the first and to reject the second.

I want to reiterate most of the comments made by honourable members on the government side of the House. I thank my colleague the member for Townsville very much for putting a personal note in the debate when she summed up the struggle and the difficulties that are faced by a lot of young people who come into contact with the juvenile justice system. Very often these are children who are thrown into an adult world and who are faced with making adult decisions. We need to treat them firmly, but with sensitivity. I am pleased that the government's bill balances our dual responsibilities of ensuring that serious crime is appropriately dealt with and giving young offenders a chance to set their lives straight.

The amendments enact the government's election commitment to improve our youth justice system. I would like to congratulate and pay my respects to the staff of the Department of Communities' youth justice services. These staff are responsible for supervising young people involved in the youth justice system. They do a fantastic job in working with young people and with the family of those young people to address the factors that contribute to their offending behaviour and in encouraging young people to build positive connections with their community.

Youth conferencing has been mentioned by many honourable members in this debate. It is a very useful tool. It has been successful, because it ensures that the young person is held accountable for their offending behaviour. It gives them the opportunity to, first of all, accept responsibility and admit their offence and understand the consequences and hear about the impact of their decisions. Finally, youth conferencing gives young offenders an opportunity to make amends—to apologise or offer some form of restitution. Conferencing reduces recidivism. It gives victims an opportunity to be involved and to get some answers. This bill will give stronger powers to police to deal with those who do not comply with youth justice conferencing arrangements, who contravene an agreement or who fail to attend a drug assessment session. I am pleased to inform the House that the majority of young people who come into contact with Queensland's youth justice system never reoffend. So we are dealing with a minority of serious offenders.

I want to take this opportunity to mention a few fantastic local organisations that work with young people in the electorate of Sandgate. They have the sorts of programs that help young people connect with their community, which is so important to them in staying sound and grounded. A great program in the Metropolitan North police district is CRYPAR, which stands for the coordinated response to young people at risk. It is an early intervention prevention initiative that is being piloted. Under the program police work with young people aged 12 years and over who they believe are at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. So I congratulate all the officers who work in the CRYPAR program.

Jabiru is a fantastic organisation based at Bracken Ridge. It offers assistance to a range of suburbs on the north side. My colleague the honourable member for Aspley will know of the work Jabiru does because it is located throughout her electorate as well. It does not necessarily deal with offenders; it finds

students who are struggling in the traditional school environment. It has a special classroom for young people who do not fit into the traditional way of schooling. Many of them are at risk of coming into contact with the juvenile justice system. The minister took the opportunity to come and visit the students. They were very pleased to have the Minister for Community Services visiting. They are a great bunch of young people in a really successful classroom that is off campus, away from the high school, providing the sort of support and connection that young people need.

I know that every member in this place will speak wonderful words about their Police Citizens Youth Club and the sorts of activities and support that it provides in the local community. Sandgate PCYC is going from strength to strength. I am its patron. I am pleased to be able to continue supporting it as it expands its program particularly into those teenage years. The PCYC is at one end of the Deagon sports field; the BMX bike and skating bowl is at the other end. They are seeing what partnerships and activities they can do together to really help strengthen the community.

Finally, the officers at my local police station at Sandgate, who are a great support to me and respond very quickly to concerns I raise on behalf of residents, work very hard with the young people in our area to make sure that we can catch those young people who may fall into the gaps. We have a fantastic youth population in our area. I know that the few people who really need help and support can rely on the police as well as those community services in the Sandgate electorate.

I congratulate the minister and departmental staff for the hard work that has gone into this bill. It has been very broadly consulted on. Congratulations on the fine balance that has been reached. I support the government's bill but unfortunately will not be supporting the private member's bill.