




Speech by  
**Sean Choat**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST**

Hansard Tuesday, 27 November 2012

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## **YOUTH JUSTICE (BOOT CAMP ORDERS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr CHOAT** (Ipswich West—LNP) (10.19 pm): I rise to also make a contribution to the debate on the Youth Justice (Boot Camp Orders) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. As a member of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee and as a concerned member of my community, I am pleased to speak in support of this bill, which I am sure will have a positive impact on our communities.

This bill most certainly recommends the implementation of key LNP election promises. It is pleasing to see yet another example of the Newman LNP government getting on with the business of governing the state in line with the expectations of Queenslanders and providing protection for the wider community against the disturbing trend of juvenile crime. The objective of the bill is to amend the Youth Justice Act 1992 on an issue which is unfortunately becoming an all-too familiar problem reported in local media across Queensland and also in my local area.

I am deeply concerned about the rising incidence of juvenile crimes reported in communities that make up the electorate of Ipswich West. The objectives of the bill are to introduce a boot camp order as an option for juvenile offenders instead of detention and to remove the option of court referred youth justice conferencing. I want to point out that like my colleague the member for Broadwater as a member of the committee I did not support the committee's recommendation No. 9 for the same reasons that the member put earlier.

The bill also deals with amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 to allow operators of hotels to ask sex workers to leave the premises if being used for work and impose eligibility requirements that are based on citizenship or visa status for those who are benefiting from government services, assistance and support. I want to focus on the areas concerning youth justice. My views on dealing with youth crime are well known in my community. People have had enough of the revolving doors of our courts and the go-soft options taken by many in those courts—the slap-on-the-wrist mentality, as they say. I am a parent and in my household children are taught that they have certain responsibilities for certain behaviour and that there are consequences for their actions if they step out of line. I also know well and appreciate the attitudes and ideas of young people. The vast majority of our youth are decent people who will grow to contribute to and build our society in very positive ways.

Some years ago I was young, too, and a colourful character at that—although as long as those colours were black. Though my appearance in the 1980s and into the 1990s was a shock to some people, my attitude was always a pleasant surprise. Young people are often different in their appearance and that should be celebrated in most cases. Young people should, as I did, take responsibility for their actions. Indeed, I was taught from a young age that consequence was the best form of prevention of bad behaviour. Sadly, for an increasing number that no longer applies. Just last week I attended the Rosewood and Walloon Consultative Committee which is made up of concerned members of the community about issues relating to their local area. We talked about the lack of positive role models for a great many young people in our community. The consensus of the meeting was that this is one of the largest root causes of the problems we are seeing with our youth in the community.

I want to reject statements made by the Leader of the Opposition earlier this evening. In my community people are overwhelmingly pleased to see the implementation of these trials of boot camps in 2013. The people who seem to be rejecting these ideas are the same ilk, they are hanky wringers, they are the people who will tell you that you cannot smack your kids. Well, you can, and in some cases you certainly should. My kids know that if they do the wrong thing a consequence could be a good smack on the backside.

Something that really must be done is to look at opportunities for giving young people a second chance. Sadly, up to 30 per cent of young people who are detained in prisons have been there five times before. That is really concerning. Obviously those strategies are not working. This initiative of the LNP government is a great opportunity and something that people want to see happen. Boot camps have never been tried before in this way by a government like this that has the resolve to address the issues. We have people saying boot camps do not work, but they have not been conducted in the way that the LNP government will trial them next year. I am very confident that we will have some positive results out of this great initiative.

There are small communities that make up my electorate. Regularly on a Friday and Saturday night throughout school holidays some residents feel as though they are prisoners in their own homes. They are disturbed to hear at night rubbish bins being kicked over, cars being vandalised and to wake up the next morning to find rubbish up the street. They have had enough. Some of the kids are as young as 14. They unfortunately do not have positive role models at home. They are not taught boundaries. When they go to school they show no restraint. There is no discipline. Unfortunately our teaching professionals have to deal with this. I am convinced that the implementation of these trials in 2013 will dawn a new era in how we address this growing problem—this scary, sad problem—and that we are going to provide an alternative means of dealing with some of the very vulnerable people that at the moment are running amok in our community.

I am confident that at the end of these trials there will be opportunity for communities like Ipswich West to also host boot camps. We have the facilities. The Attorney knows that I am keen to see this happen. In fact, I have broached this with a number of community leaders and they believe it would be a great idea. I am sure that the average person wants to see juvenile crime addressed and they are prepared to try things like boot camps. If we can turn one young life around, the \$2 million is well worth it. I am confident that there will be any number of the 80 in each instance who will get that second opportunity, who will turn themselves around. They will have, for the first time in their lives, an opportunity to be mentored. I am hoping to gain new skills. Members will know that for 23 years prior to entering this place I was involved with vocational education and training. Truly that is the levelling of the playing field. Over the years I have seen many young people who have been given an opportunity for VET in the TAFE system, and also when I worked in the railway, gain self-confidence and pride, all of the things that the people who are running amok in our society at the moment of a night—as I have said, as young as 14 or, dare I say, younger—have not had an opportunity for. I believe this will take them to the next step where they can contribute to society, they can lead fulfilled lives and really make something of themselves.

I look forward to seeing the benefits this bill will provide to the community for its safety and the reassurance it will give the law-abiding people of towns like Rosewood, Lowood and Fernvale and suburbs like Brassall and North Ipswich. I really think that it will provide a much needed strategy of intervention and rehabilitation for young offenders, providing an opportunity for these people in this great state. I commend the bill to the House.