




Speech by

Steve Davies

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

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

 **Mr DAVIES** (Capalaba—LNP) (10.39 pm): Firstly, I acknowledge the impassioned speech of the member for Hervey Bay. It was a very heartfelt speech. Tonight I am pleased to also stand in support of the Youth Justice (Boot Camp Orders) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I too rise to commend the great work of the Attorney-General in bringing this legislation before the House.

This bill fulfils our pre-election pledge to introduce youth boot camps to put a stop to the cycle of youth crime and give young offenders a chance at real and meaningful rehabilitation. I was very honoured when the Premier and the Attorney-General asked me to play a role—albeit a small role—in looking at the boot camp model. I participated in a number of round table events with people who can only be described as Queensland's best and brightest in the youth welfare, crime and rehabilitation space.

As a result of this input, the government is trialling two models for youth boot camps. The first is an early intervention youth boot camp program which will be trialled on the Gold Coast. This program will target at-risk young people—that is, those whose current behaviour and life choices mean that there is a high likelihood that they may soon be entering the criminal justice system. I believe this model is vital as an ounce of prevention is much better than a pound of cure. I commend the Attorney-General for having the foresight to run with this pilot.

The second of our youth boot camp models will introduce a supervised youth justice order as an option before detention. This bill will provide courts with this new sentencing option. This boot camp order is targeted at those young people who are facing detention. It will provide young offenders the opportunity to break the cycle that is crime and detention and begin to make positive life choices and get their life on the right track. Both of these programs are part of the Safer Streets Crime Action Plan and will take a whole-of-government approach to working with 80 young people over two years.

One of the real highlights of these trials is the involvement of a young person's family. This holistic, whole-of-life approach will identify and seek to work through difficulties within and with the family which may be contributing to a young person's behaviour and seek to work with the young person and their family to provide the best possible chance of the young person having the opportunities each and every one of us would wish for our children.

As someone who as a youth would have been a prime candidate for the boot camps being legislated here today, I feel I bring with me a wealth of knowledge as someone who not only has experienced severe dysfunction in their formative years but also has worked for the past quarter of a century with young Queenslanders, many who would be considered at risk. Many people here know my story—a story that led me from the brink of complete social isolation to one of community engagement. Along the way I watched many of my friends make seriously negative decisions that saw them enter into a system that meant their choices had serious and life-changing consequences.

For anyone who has visited a correction facility, especially a maximum security facility, the sense of hopelessness and lost opportunity is palpable. The 40-year-old man pacing the exercise yard was once a young child with hopes and dreams which he no longer has. Although I personally believe that the punitive element of our correctional system should not be lightly discounted, we as a government are doing everything we can to stop young people from throwing their lives away. There is no doubt in my mind that the at-risk 15-year-old kid in high school in Kingaroy—that was me—would have benefited from the boot camp model being trialled on the Gold Coast. This model would have made a real difference in my life. I believe it would have helped me make the right choices.

Regardless of the manner in which it comes, I can attest to the value of a second chance and the value of a government that is concerned enough about our young people to find an alternative arrangement to detention to address the challenges facing our young people. Boot camps are not only good for the individual, they are good for society. If through these programs and programs like them we can provide positive pathways for at-risk and young offenders, the financial and social benefit to the state and society in general will be immense. The LNP government has fulfilled an election promise that is in line with community expectations to match community concern with escalating youth offences. But far more tangible for those who will find themselves experiencing this trial, they will be given a second chance.

Boot camps are designed to highlight to those going through the camp that their current choices are destructive. This is achieved through physical activity and then a highly specific program of offence based counselling aimed at turning around the offenders' attitudes that have led them to a point of needing intervention. This trial incorporates the essentials needed for a serious wake-up call for offenders who have their entire lives ahead of them. The residential phase and the mentoring phase have the right ingredients of support from family and reparation programs that will get these kids back on the path to being engaged with their community and kick-start their learning or training to get them back on the path to schooling or employment.

The best part of this program is the personalised nature of its construction to fit the needs of the offender. Rather than a cookie cut mould for a variety of different circumstances, an approach that may have contributed to them being there in the first place, this trial will establish programs on a needs basis of those using it to enable the best possible outcomes and results. By instilling respect, discipline and values the community shares in those taking part in the trial, we expect those who complete the trial to come out of it empowered to make constructive choices for their lives that will give them a future and hope. I commend the Attorney-General for standing up for young people and for giving them a second chance. I commend the bill to the House.