




Speech By  
**Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 March 2014

### **YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (8.50 pm): I rise to oppose the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. At the outset I must point out that important legislation like this—any legislation in fact—requires consultation with the people and the groups who understand what they are talking about. I note that the government has undertaken consultation in this instance but, critically and true to form for this Attorney-General, it appears to have been merely a token effort because what he has refused to do again is take on board advice gathered from that consultation. In fact, again he has ignored it. Let me be very clear: the Labor opposition is absolutely committed to reducing the level of youth crime in Queensland. The Labor opposition is absolutely committed to the rights and the care of the victims of crime. The LNP clearly is not as committed as it introduces legislation that is as disturbing as it is foolish.

The significant outcomes of this legislation will be more crime and, unfortunately, more victims. Why am I so sure of this outcome? Because, unlike the Attorney-General, I have reviewed the feedback from stakeholders about these laws and while the viewpoints and backgrounds of the stakeholder submissions were as diverse as the stakeholders themselves, there was one undeniable message coming through and that message was crystal clear: these laws will not work. The view was unanimous from the Queensland Law Society through to academics, churches, child safety organisations and individuals. Like these diverse groups, I am perplexed by not only this Attorney-General's only occasional willingness to consult but also his subsequent refusal to take solid, sensible, learned advice on board. Instead of listening and accepting the advice and the expertise of those people in far more qualified positions to know, his preference is ignorance.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Watts): Order! You have the call, Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK**: I am waiting for the interjections to finish, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: So you are not taking the interjections?

**Ms PALASZCZUK**: I am not taking interjections.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Okay. I call the House to order.

**Ms PALASZCZUK**: Through his ignorance, he is prepared to ruin children's lives for the sake of his ongoing experiment in populist politics. How ignorant is he? He is so ignorant that he is prepared to even ignore the advice of his own department on this issue. His own department, through the submission process, told the Attorney-General that in terms of crime prevention, providing education and employment, better support to children suffering violence and neglect, and providing treatment for drug addiction are the most effective interventions.

I listened with utmost interest to what the member for Woodridge had to say in relation to the programs that were running in her electorate that were providing great outcomes. They are very

effective in rehabilitating these young children and giving them some purpose for getting on with the rest of their lives. I reflected on some issues such as that it was this government that axed the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. This was a program that actually gave young people the ability to get a job—to get a job so they could have the dignity of getting up each morning and going to work and getting a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

This government talks about releasing a blueprint later this year looking at early intervention and prevention when what they should have done is presented this blueprint in the first place. They have cut programs which have targeted prevention and early intervention and they have come in here with a quick fix solution that does not have the support of the major stakeholders. I was very interested to note that the Queensland Law Society issued a press release today from which I would like to read. I think it is very interesting that the government purports in this instance to be consulting, but let's be very clear about what the Queensland Law Society said. This media release was issued on 18 March 2014. It states—

Harsher punishment does not reduce youth crime

Queensland Law Society and the Youth Advocacy Centre today cautioned that the government's proposed changes to youth justice would not reduce reoffending.

Queensland Law Society president Ian Brown said the existing 'tough on crime' approach was having limited effect on reducing the total number of young offenders.

"According to the Childrens Court of Queensland's 2012-13 Annual Report, the total number of child defendants has been largely stable over the last ten years, but there are some persistent repeat offenders," Mr Brown said.

"This strongly indicates that to address youth crime, the most appropriate and effective way would be to focus targeted intervention strategies on this group of young people, not radically reform youth justice legislation aimed at all children and young people.

"Our issues with the proposed changes range from impeding judicial discretion to contravening international conventions.

"The government's proposal to remove detention as a last resort is troubling, particularly as it states that courts cannot regard this principle in decision making.

"This will impact upon the judiciary's ability to make sentencing orders that are appropriate to meet children's individual circumstances.

"We also strongly object to publicly naming a child coming before the courts, which could create a major obstacle to getting them back on the right track.

"Naming and shaming interferes with the right to privacy in international conventions and is inconsistent with the purpose of our youth justice system.

Youth Advocacy Centre director Janet Wight said the proposed changes would not address the causes of youth offending and would increase the alienation and isolation of at-risk children.

"The Youth Advocacy Centre deals every day with young offenders from diverse backgrounds, but the one constant is that many of these young people are affected by traumatic incidents or situations, including, violence, homelessness, mental health and drug and alcohol issues," Ms Wight said.

"Seventy per cent of young people in the youth justice system are known to the child protection system.

"In the long term, it is more beneficial for the community to ensure that young people are supported to stop committing further crimes by addressing underlying personal circumstances."

Mr Brown said the concerns of Queensland Law Society and the Youth Advocacy Centre that these measures would have limited effect on youth crime were reinforced by comments made by the Acting Assistant Director-General, Youth Justice, Department of Justice and Attorney-General at the Parliamentary Committee at the public hearing on 3 March—

He quotes William Byrne MP asking the question—

"Am I asking too much to ask whether there is any material, peer reviewed, that can point to these measures having any prospect of changing the present dynamic?"

In response, Mr Sean Harvey, Acting Assistant Director-General of the department, said—

"There is no immediate evidence available to us to make that."

This is clearly what the Law Society thinks of these laws being passed tonight. They do not support them. We do not support them. They are not going to work and it is about time that this government listened to what people had to say rather than thinking that they know it all.