




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 18 March 2014

YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (9.09 pm), in reply: How can I follow a speech like that?

A government member: I tell you: he's the best member for Burleigh we've got at the moment. He's the best member for Burleigh we've got at the moment.

Mr BLEIJIE: Absolutely; best member we have for the moment. I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate tonight. This is an important debate dealing with and tackling the issues of youth crime right across Queensland. We first heard that we are ensuring that young people are held responsible and understand that there are consequences for their actions and then we had the privilege of government members setting out the future of youth justice reform in this state—of course looking at the blueprint—to ensure that we get these kids an education, get them a job and get them on the right path in life. We have always said that there are a few elements to this youth justice regime, and that was ensuring that the fun stopped in detention centres—the bucking bulls were cancelled, the jumping castles were cancelled and the Xboxes were cancelled. I take the hand gesture interjection from the member for Gregory. I have only been on my feet for a minute; I assure the member for Gregory that I will not but use any more than 29 minutes left on the clock.

As I was saying, we are dealing with the issue of youth justice. We got rid of the fun and excitement in detention centres. We then set up the boot camp strategy in relation to making sure that there is an intervention program on offer, because I heard many members talk about early intervention. That is exactly what this does: it diverts people from detention centres into boot camps, and they are going spectacularly well. Some 85 young people have been in the four boot camps across Queensland. If we head north to south, there is the Townsville and Cairns super boot camp being run by Beyond Billabong with Mr Boyd Curran doing great things for young people. There is also an amendment in this bill dealing with a mandatory boot camp order to ensure that those young people engaged in multiple car offences are sent to boot camp to try to sort their lives out and get them back on track. I have dealt with the Townsville-Cairns boot camp and satisfied members from North Queensland.

There is then the Rockhampton boot camp, which I talked about before, which is the early intervention boot camp. While on the subject of the Rockhampton boot camp, I made some notations at the start in relation to the member for Rockhampton. This is an opportune time to not only again remind honourable members what the opposition's position on this is but also remind honourable members what the member for Rockhampton's submissions to this issue have been and what he thinks of PCYCs, Police Citizens Youth Clubs. As I said, there are many PCYCs right across Queensland and they are doing youth programs on a daily basis. It could be ascertained that all honourable members would give 100 per cent support for their PCYCs, but not the member for Rockhampton. Whether or not it is a fact that the former member for Rockhampton, Mr Schwarten, did not or did support PCYCs, the fact remains that the current member for Rockhampton does not

support the PCYC in his own electorate. In fact, I hear from the locals in Rockhampton that the member for Rockhampton rarely, if ever, shows up to any of the youth justice forums to tackle these issues. So he completely wipes his hands of the issue of youth justice while publicans in his area, the community in his area and community groups in his area are calling for these sorts of things. It certainly shows that one does not fully appreciate and understand their electorate, because if the member for Rockhampton did then he would understand that there is a great community sense for PCYCs.

While we are on the subject of hypocrisy, incompetence and everything else, let us talk about the Labor Party position. I said it flip-flops on criminal gang laws and it flip-flops on tough sex offender laws. Mr Byrne, the member for Rockhampton, comes in here espousing in his contribution to the second reading debate all of the issues relating to boot camps and says that he has spoken forever on boot camps and that they do not work and all of this sort of drivel coming from his mouth. However, he was a candidate for the Labor Party that went to the 2012 election with a boot camp policy—a 2012 policy for the Labor Party. This was apparently a policy that he campaigned for. He ran for the Labor Party in 2012. He campaigned for this policy under the title 'For Queenslanders'—I suspect the member for Rockhampton's electorate, but Queenslanders—with the title 'Walking Kokoda: Putting Young Queenslanders on the Right Track'. He will say that was the former government, yet he was a candidate for the former government. There is another interesting element to this: not only did Labor have a boot camp policy in 2012 which two years later it does not support; it was giving money directly to Kokoda Challenge.

An honourable member: That's right.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is right. Guess what? The early intervention boot camp at the Gold Coast that we have supported is Kokoda Challenge—the same place!

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! Pause the clock please. I will remind both sides of the House to direct their comments through the chair.

Mr BLEIJIE: The absolute hypocrisy! The shadow police minister is shaking his head now like, 'I wish 2012 never existed! I just wish it never existed. Why did I go to the 2012 election with a policy for boot camps?' You cannot deny the facts. You cannot deny that it ever happened! He wants to live in a world where this eight-page policy never existed. In fact, if he never read the Labor Party policy on boot camps when he apparently was a candidate campaigning for boot camps, then he should have read about it in the newspaper, because it was on the *Brisbane Times*: 'Bligh pledges \$1 million for Kokoda Challenge'. It was your policy.

Mr Byrne: Yes, but nothing to do with boot camps.

Mr BLEIJIE: He interjects and he says 'nothing to do with boot camps'.

Mr Byrne interjected.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BLEIJIE: I need some of my colleagues to turn some of these other microphones on because I cannot hear myself over the member for Rockhampton. Let me just switch a couple of these other microphones on so Hansard can hear me.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: They will not all work.

Mr BLEIJIE: So we have a situation where the Labor Party goes to the 2012 election campaign with a policy of boot camps and the member shakes his head and says, 'It wasn't a boot camp. It was the Kokoda Challenge group that runs the early intervention boot camps.'

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: So it was boot camp by another name, and now they just deny it. If we look at the last few weeks, we have the Labor Party coming in here supporting legislation to stand tough against gangs in Queensland. We then have over the course of two weeks flip-flopping and not knowing where they are going to go in terms of banning young people from going to nightclubs and all of that sort of stuff. They say, 'We don't want to be tough on crime, so we're going to repeal the criminal gang legislation.' Then in terms of the sex offender legislation, they opposed the Governor in Council having the ability to permanently detain sex offenders in jail. They voted against it.

Last year they voted against the two-strike legislation to ensure that monsters—the worst of the worst sex offenders—were behind bars. Lo and behold, two days ago the opposition leader holds a press conference. After opposing all of the tough sex offender laws, she holds a press conference and she says, ‘We don’t want to use the Morcombe case to politicise this issue, but the government should get tougher on sex offenders.’ We have for two years and they have opposed it every step of the way! But now they are tough on sex offenders. When we get to this bill and the rhetoric around young offenders—‘We’re going to get them back on track and get them sorted out,’—come two years later there is a new position for the Labor Party. I fully suspect that when Cameron Dick starts campaigning in a couple of weeks time from outside this place—Cameron Dick running for not only the seat of Woodridge but also Premier of this state—he will have a different position on all of these issues and, I suspect, many of the issues that the Labor Party has talked about over the last couple of years. That is what will happen when the new Labor candidate for Premier, Cameron Dick, and Deputy Premier running for the Labor Party, Yvette D’Ath, are sitting over there. But I think the one who we really should feel sorry for is the member for South Brisbane because, now that Cameron is back in town, I do not like her chances of becoming the leader of the Labor Party. I always knew that the honourable members on this side of the House—

Mr JUDGE: I rise to a point of order. What is the relevance of this?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! Attorney-General, I will remind you to stay relevant.

Mr BLEIJIE: I will tell the member for Yeerongpilly—

A government member: I am listening with intent.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is good. I will tell the member for Yeerongpilly what this relates to. I will get to the member for Yeerongpilly in a minute. This is about hypocrisy. This is about making sure that the government of Queensland lets Queenslanders know what the alternative government of Queensland’s position is. That is what this is about. I think that I have demonstrated the nexus to the satisfaction of all honourable members.

While I am on the subject of hypocrisy, I note that the member for Yeerongpilly stood in this place and gave an interesting contribution. I think he was channelling the member for Nicklin in his contribution. I also saw the member for Condamine during his contribution receive some advice from the member for Nicklin when he was trying to do over the Deputy Speaker. The member for Nicklin was leaning across saying, ‘Say this. Say that.’ The member for Condamine jumped up and said that and, of course, got sat down by the Deputy Speaker because he was completely out of order.

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order. I find those comments totally offensive from the poor little man and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is a fact. Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member rose and made an interjection and said that he was going to move a motion of dissent against a ruling. I have repeated a fact.

Mr HOPPER: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney-General, will you withdraw?

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: Now that I am on the subject of the member for Condamine, let me go a little deeper, because that man sitting in that corner is not representative of the people of Condamine. Along with a couple of the other gurus in the back corner, I have never seen so much incompetence. They never represent their electorates with their hearts. While I am talking about the members for Condamine, Yeerongpilly and Nicklin, let me talk about this commitment to constituents. The member for Yeerongpilly in his contribution said that all honourable members should have a strong commitment to their constituents. That came from the fellow who is cutting and running from the electorate of Yeerongpilly. What do the constituents of the electorate of Yeerongpilly think about their member? They do not have a voice in parliament anymore. He has absolutely abandoned his electorate.

Mr JUDGE: I rise to a point of order. I made it quite clear today that I am 100 per cent committed to my electorate. He is misleading the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, he sends out—

Mr Hopper interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Condamine! I do not wish to name you.

Mr BLEIJIE: Clive sent out a CD a bit early and lets the world know that the member for Yeerongpilly is switching seats. The member for Yeerongpilly then says that politicians should have a commitment to their electorate and then above and beyond that just says that he has 100 per cent commitment to the electorate of Yeerongpilly. I will tell members the commitment that he has to the electorate of Yeerongpilly or the commitment that he has to the Sunshine Coast. The other day, when he was asked how—

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask you to rule on relevance. There is nothing in what the Attorney-General is conveying to the House that is connected to the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your point of order, but if people interject the Attorney-General is allowed to reply.

Mr BLEIJIE: When asked in the media recently about his abandonment of the electorate of Yeerongpilly he said, 'Yes, I holiday to Mooloolaba a little bit.' He holidays and, therefore, he is an expert in abandonment.

Mr WELLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move—

That the question be put.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Under standing order 88 I am not of the opinion that there has been sufficient debate. The Attorney-General has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank, Mr Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, that mob that sits up the back corner and espouse that they represent their electorates—

Mr Ruthenberg: Not us.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I can assure government members that I am talking about the far back corner. The point is that those members flip-flop on all of these positions. They wake up in the morning, they have a position on this and a position on that. They go to bed and they have completely changed their position. The member for Yeerongpilly stands in this place as the member for Yeerongpilly. I really question his commitment to the electorate of Yeerongpilly. Although he has just said that he is 100 per cent committed, he visits the Sunshine Coast every so often so he is going to abandon it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am going to treat the member for Yeerongpilly with the contempt that he deserves and move on to the contributions of other members, which you will be happy about. Let me go back to the position of the Labor Party on this issue. We have made it absolutely clear that we have four elements of reform in youth justice. The first element is that we ended the fun in the detention centres. We got rid of the bucking bulls, the jumping castles, the Xboxes. The second element is that we made sure that we introduced boot camps. There are four boot camps located across the state. There is an early intervention boot camp and a super boot camp in Cairns and Townsville. The third element to the puzzle is this bill, which deals with a specific offence if you breach bail and moving 17-year-olds after they have served over six months into adult detention.

During the debate the member for Gladstone asked a question about 17-year-olds being moved to adult detention after they have served six months imprisonment. If a 17-year-old is in a youth justice centre and has over six months left to serve, they will be transferred. I can advise the member for Gladstone that, through Corrective Services, most of the time those offenders are segregated from other adult offenders. They are also placed specifically on different programs. I do not have the exact number for the member for Gladstone of how many are currently in those facilities, because under our sentencing regime in Queensland 17-year-olds are sentenced to adult detention centres and jails, but I would envisage that the acting Commissioner for Corrections will make sure that any 17-year-olds who are moved under this program will receive appropriate programs and be kept as segregated as they possibly can be in terms of security issues. We will do that. I advise the member for Gladstone that there is not a huge number. If we look at the mid-20-year-olds in our youth detention centres at the moment we see that there are only a few. We are not dealing with a huge number. So I do not think that it would be a particular burden on the corrective services system.

This bill also addresses the admissibility of evidence at future dates. If a young person has a few convictions and they turn 17 and they commit offences as an adult under our laws, the judge on sentencing—not at trial, just on sentencing—has the option to look at the whole picture. At the moment when a judge sentences a 17-year-old or an 18-year-old, most of the time that judge does not have the history of the young offender. This will not occur at trial; it will occur only at sentencing. So the offender will be convicted and then on sentencing the judge can say, 'You don't have a clean

slate. You have had, for instance, a few drug offences so I am going to potentially give you a higher punishment taking into consideration previous offences.'

Many times when a 17-year-old goes to court their previous criminal history is not evident to the court and the court therefore has to judge them as a clean state when that is not the case. Prosecutors get very frustrated when they know the previous criminal histories and they see these people walking away without any appropriate deterrent or punishment. The prosecutors know what these people have got up to whilst they were young.

For repeat young offenders the courts will be open. The submissions talk about naming and shaming. Not every young person is going to be named and shamed. For people in the community who are interested in these things the court will be open. Media will publish names if it is in the public interest to do so. There will not be a register of young people with photos up on community noticeboards of every young person who goes before our court as a repeat young offender. The world will go on. The day-to-day operations of the court and the justice system will proceed.

The future is a youth justice blueprint to make sure that we steer youth on the right path. Last week I met with the Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt. He has agreed, with his committee, to look at our youth justice blueprint that we will be developing over the next few weeks. We are bringing those sorts of people in to ensure that the long-term future of youth justice in Queensland, as well as all the things we have already done, is in place.

I have said on many occasions that we want to rebalance the scales of justice. For too long the Labor Party put the rights of the offenders before the rights of the victims. Under the Labor Party victims did not have a voice. One thing we have learnt in our two years of government is that the Labor Party gave the victim no voice in the justice system. We have done that by mandating that victim impact statements be read out in court. Anyone who saw the trial of Brett Cowan would have seen Denise and Bruce Morcombe give victim impact statements to the court. Bruce read out his victim impact statement. Last year we passed legislation in this parliament to allow victims to have a say in the justice system. We mandated that victim impact statements are read out in court. As part of our justice system we have to ensure that the victims have a say and can be engaged in the process and that the community can see justice being done. I think that is what we are seeing now through these law reforms.

Youth justice is an important issue for members right around Queensland. This government has been combatting issues of youth justice, particularly in Townsville in relation to repeat juvenile offenders in respect of car theft. The amendment that I will move will ensure that young people get off the streets of Townsville and move into the boot camps to sort their lives out. Members opposite talk about boot camps and early intervention. Boot camps are an early intervention scheme. They involve the families and the parents. I have received letters from parents who have their children in the boot camps at the moment saying thank you, because for the first time their son or daughter has their life back on track, they are behaving in school. Those are the facts. That is why it is important to continue to do what we do.

I might add that members in this House, in particular those on the government side that I have been speaking to, would like to see these sorts of early intervention boot camps in their areas. I have been to the Pumicestone area. I have spoken to the member for Morayfield who wants a youth boot camp early intervention program in his electorate. I have been to the member for Cleveland's electorate talking about law and order reform. Last week I attended a great law and order forum at Chatsworth. I thank the member for organising that. In the last 18 months I have visited over 6,000 justices of the peace around Queensland. I thank the JPs. A couple of weeks ago I was at the member for Kallangur's electorate with 140 JPs. We talked about all things JP, but also how this government is tackling some of the major issues in the state in terms of criminal gangs.

This government has the priority of rebalancing the scales of justice and ensuring that upon rebalancing the scales of justice we give the victims in the equation a greater say. The Queensland community wants to see justice being done. I think Queenslanders at the next election will wake up to the hypocrisy of the member for Condamine and the member for Yeerongpilly, wherever he may be at the time. Going into the next election they will also be looking at the policies of the leader of the Labor Party, Cameron Dick. We know that the current Leader of the Opposition will not be the Leader of the Opposition going into the election. That is all but guaranteed with the factional warlords—

Mrs Miller: She'll be Premier.

Mr BLEIJIE: What, Cameron Dick will be the Premier?

Mrs Miller: No, Annastacia Palaszczuk will be the Premier.

Mr BLEIJIE: I thought I heard an interjection from the member for Bundamba saying 'He'll be Premier.' I don't know if she said Cameron Dick will be Premier, but if that is her assessment, that Cameron Dick will be Premier, I think that shows that Cameron Dick will be the leader of the Labor Party. The member for Bundamba might end up Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is too much interjection. Members on my right and left will cease interjecting. The Attorney-General has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the call and thank all honourable members for their enthusiastic contributions to the debate on this important subject matter. We have a plan to tackle youth issues in this state. It will culminate with a youth justice blueprint, pointing children and young people in the right direction, getting young people a job and an education and making sure that they are not committing crimes, are taking responsibility for their actions and are contributing positively to society.