




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION (INCLUSION OF 17-YEAR-OLD PERSONS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (5.30 pm): This Labor Palaszczuk government cannot even manage train timetables, so how can we trust them to manage something far more complex such as the transition of hardened 17-year-old criminals into the youth justice system? Sometimes things on the surface look attractive, but it is when you start to look at the detail that you realise you need a good plan and you need to know what you are doing. There should not be any naivety about this process.

My real concern has been outlined by a number of my colleagues. They have raised the concern that there is no plan to effectively make this transition and get the outcomes we all want to see—that is, fewer people committing crimes and fewer people being subjected to crime themselves. Clearly, there are valid concerns about the lack of detail around Labor's plan because this legislation is not accompanied by a plan; it is a headline with a power to transition 17-year-old criminals into the youth detention system but there is no detail as to how that is going to be done. That is where the real concern is.

How can we trust this Labor government when they have a litany of failed administration which have caused serious concerns? We have seen it with the Health payroll system and the devastation that caused for the health professionals. We have seen it in a number of other areas of administration. It is time there was recognition of this failed administration and shonky government because they have had a significant impact on people's everyday lives.

Mr FURNER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I refer to standing order 236. The member for Maroochydore is totally off track on this bill and is completely irrelevant to the youth justice bill before the chamber. I ask you to bring her back to being relevant.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): I am listening very carefully to the contribution of the member for Maroochydore. I would just remind her of the long title of the bill.

Ms SIMPSON: I remind the member who took offence to the fact that the government have a failed administration in regard to serious and complex issues and that they ignored that failed administration that this is entirely relevant to the issue before the House. The criticism that we in opposition have of this Labor government is that they cannot manage a chook raffle, let alone complex and difficult issues such as this.

I believe there are people of good intent who do want to see 17-year-olds removed from adult prisons for very laudable reasons. The concern we have raised is that any such transition has to be accompanied by an appropriate plan and consideration so there are no unintended consequences, but we have not seen that plan. I can hear the squawking of the member who took offence to the fact that I have raised this litany of failed administration of Labor governments in this state, and this government in particular, but we have to raise it here. It is not enough to have good intentions; the government has to have good actions and has to understand its plans and how to administer them. Otherwise, people will be more damaged than they already are and the circumstances of their lives of crime.

As my colleague the member for Everton outlined, not all 17-year-olds have committed the same level of crime. Some offenders have committed grievous crimes such as murder, while others have committed different levels of crime which, while necessitate them being brought into the criminal justice system, are not of the same gravity and they cannot be treated in the same way. There must be a realistic way of addressing the issue of how these 17-year-olds are dealt with in the criminal justice system.

This soft-on-crime Labor government have simply scrapped the LNP government's 2014 youth justice reforms without putting something else more effective in their place. Once again, they say they are going to make things better, but they have not in fact administered and brought about the very action they claimed they wanted to. They are simply about headlines rather than substance. In the last 12 months, they have not introduced any new policies or reforms with regard to effectively combating juvenile crime. One of the issues my colleagues have raised—and I will raise it here as well—is the need to address early intervention and prevention. One of the most cost-effective ways to address that range of crimes that people see reflected through the youth detention system and the adult criminal justice system is early intervention. It is always a lot more expensive to deal with people who are hardened in their criminal ways and have had years of criminal activity, whether as juveniles or as adults. Early intervention was the focus of the LNP's plan with some of our youth justice initiatives. This Labor government have been critical of those, but once again they have failed to deliver something better.

The issue of recidivism and breaking the cycle of recidivism is extremely significant. As my colleague the member for Everton also mentioned, there has been an ad hoc way of approaching a lot of these issues where really it is time there was a root-and-branch full understanding of the cycle of crime so we can see a real breakthrough in the way we address recidivism. There is also an issue around transition for people who are in detention or adult jails. The issue of reform while in jail and after jail has not yet been appropriately addressed. It is very much an ad hoc approach that we see from the Labor government.

The Labor government have now come up with a proposal to transfer 17-year-old offenders from the adult criminal justice system into the youth justice system without any tangible plan on how to deal with the practicalities of this change and in particular how to keep younger children safe and separate from these older 17-year-old criminals. They have talked about it in theory but there is no detail about how they will do it. From evidence provided to the committee, the government have no plan on how to manage the delicate process of transitioning these 17-year-olds into youth detention facilities alongside much younger children. How can the government guarantee the safety of very young detainees—some as young as 10—if 17-year-olds who may have committed serious offences are moved into the juvenile justice system? I have heard people say that they will all be separate and that is the practice, but once again I do not have the confidence that this government have the ability to achieve that or that they understand how to achieve it.

There has to be a change—not only in the number of people who are working in this system but also with the significant new facilities that will need to be physically built to do that. Furthermore, this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government do not even have a clear picture of how much this plan would cost. They do not know what their plan is and they do not really know what it will cost. There has been an estimate that it could be about \$44 million per annum. That is a pretty significant additional amount of money, but there have been forecasts that it will be far greater than that because of that physical rebuild that has to take place.

I know it is uncomfortable for many people opposite when we ask these questions, but it is reasonable to ask the questions. It is not enough to have good intentions. It is not enough to tick that little box and say, 'We have satisfied our need to be seen to be doing the right thing,' and then not have a plan to achieve that because outcomes matter; it is not just what they say they are going to do. Outcomes matter. Guess what? They did forget to include the cost of the additional staffing requirement over that \$44 million per annum guesstimate and that is something that we have a very valid concern about.

An answer to a recent question on notice revealed that, as at 1 September 2016, there were 14 17-year-olds in youth detention and 49 17-year-olds in adult prisons. I think it is important to note that 17-year-olds in adult prisons are accommodated together with other 17-year-olds away from the rest of the adult prison population. This means that the government is planning to spend at least \$44 million—and we know it is most likely going to be a lot more than that with the capital build—to bring fewer than 50 17-year-olds from adult prisons into youth detention centres. I will say that again: this Labor government is planning to spend at least \$44 million to bring fewer than 50 17-year-olds from adult prisons into youth detention centres. Labor's plan also indicates the possible need for a new \$400 million youth detention centre. We need more than good intentions; we need good actions. We

need an overhaul in the way that recidivism, prevention and early intervention occurs not only with youth but also those in older age brackets. I would have welcomed a plan that sincerely addressed that. This legislation does not. Unfortunately, it is a damaging con because it does not provide the answers in a concrete way that will achieve those outcomes.

(Time expired)