




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015; YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (9.41 pm): I support the shadow Attorney-General in his comments just made with respect to the two bills before the House introduced by the honourable Attorney-General relating to youth justice amendments. It is clear that if we want to reduce crime in this state, particularly youth crime, we have to reduce the youth unemployment rate. If we look around the state, particularly the regions such as Townsville and the other areas of North Queensland that have high unemployment rates, we see high youth crime rates as well. That has always been the issue.

It is one thing for the Labor Party to repeal everything the LNP does, but not having a replacement or an alternative policy is another. It is no wonder that when the Minister for Training and Skills, the honourable Attorney-General, and the employment minister, who is sitting over there, are repealing all this legislation introduced by the Liberal National Party when we were in government at the same time we are seeing unemployment rise across the state. We are seeing youth unemployment skyrocketing to extremely high levels and we are seeing youth crime back on the increase, yet we are seeing no alternative plan for when this legislation is repealed. If we go back to the old days as the shadow Attorney-General said, the Labor Party will have youth detention centres operating jumping castles, bucking bulls and all these extracurricular activities that they thought would solve the issue of youth crime, not helping kids get a job or assisting kids get an education. They would not be giving them experience in the real world, but just putting them on a bucking bull in a detention centre and sending them out from the detention centre thinking they'll be right in life. They do that without giving them the experience, the expertise, the education or the job and the opportunity they need after they leave the youth detention centre.

After this bill passes tonight youth in Queensland will be exactly where they were a few years ago: a 14-year-old will be at the youth detention centre in Townsville. They will walk out of the youth detention centre, get straight into a car and be driven back to a community where they will still be committing the crimes that caused them to be in detention in the first place. They will have no rehabilitation programs, no opportunities afterwards and no employment afterwards.

Earlier I heard members interjecting about boot camps, and I note the member for Mansfield talked about boot camps. If members opposite want to talk about the boot camps, I heard recently that when the Labor Party was announcing their supposed solutions to the issues of Aurukun, they were going to send them to so-called boot camps and get them jobs working on farms. Interestingly, that is what Lincoln Springs was all about. It was about getting them out there working on the land, working on the farms, riding the horses and learning how to herd the cattle. That is what it was all about: giving young kids an opportunity that they would not have had if not for the courts. As the shadow Attorney-General said, the boot camps were optional and only if the court deemed it necessary. They

were the ones who sent them to the boot camps. If they thought the kid could get along and get ahead in life, they were the ones who sent them there. Hopefully, after they finished the boot camp program they would then have a job or an opportunity for full-time employment. We anticipated that crime would then reduce. That was supported by the community of Townsville.

I will be really interested to hear the contributions from the members for Mundingburra, Townsville and Thuringowa tonight as to how they tell their community they are dealing with the issues of youth justice. I heard from the member for Everton, who went up to the crime forum last week, that the Townsville community is not too happy that the Labor Party are ripping everything away that is dealing with youth justice and replacing it with nothing—absolutely nothing. What are they replacing it with? Do not worry; they are going to get the victim and the offender in the room together to talk to each other. We already have police youth justice conferencing. The police can warn the young individuals. We already have youth justice conferencing with the police and that is working effectively. The crime rate in Townsville was on the way down. We will see it go up, and the members for Townsville, Mundingburra and Thuringowa are going to explain to their communities why they got rid of this legislation, why they got rid of these incentives.

The member for Mansfield has even said that in his annual report the president of the Childrens Court showed that in 2014-15 the crime rate actually started to decrease on these particular issues, particularly when dealing with the repeat offenders, which was all about vehicle offences in Townsville. In the last 12 months we have seen vehicle offences increase. If we look at Tracey and Torhild from the Townsville crime action group on Facebook that they operate, we see there are thousands and thousands of members. I pay tribute to those wonderful ladies up there, Torhild and Tracey, who run that organisation because they are solving a lot of crime with the assistance of police. I pay tribute also to Paul Taylor, the superintendent up there for battling those issues of youth crime, particularly the repeat offenders who were stealing the cars.

If we look at some of the issues in this bill such as naming and shaming and also prior convictions of young offenders, we find that was a recommendation from the prosecutors. The prosecutors were getting fed up when they had an adult before the court who had committed and been convicted of all these prior offences as a young person and they did not have the ability to tell the judge about all those prior convictions. The judge would then have to sentence this person who basically had a clean slate. The prosecutors of Queensland felt it necessary to recommend the legislation be changed so that a judge could take into consideration the previous convictions of the young person because we do not want these people walking out in the community continually committing crimes if they can offer the Townsville folk, the North Queensland folk or people anywhere around Queensland a genuine rehabilitation effort. That is what it was about.

In terms of the 17-year-olds in adult correctional centres, in all the correctional centres across Queensland we are talking about only a handful of people who had particular provisions. However, there was the situation where there were 24 30-year-olds in youth detention centres. That was not good for 13-, 14-, 15- and 16-year-olds in youth detention centres. I have dealt with the prosecution issue.

Honourable members talk about the boot camps. There were lots of interjections about Lincoln Springs and so forth. Their own report, the KPMG report which we commissioned to review the boot camps, recommended that the Gold Coast boot camp stay open. In fact, for the information of those members who were not here at the time—and that is the majority of those on the Labor Party side—Anna Bligh announced a boot camp at the Gold Coast, and guess what? It was the same provider that ran the boot camp on the Gold Coast for the Liberal National Party government. Anna Bligh announced a boot camp on the Gold Coast run by the same provider who won the tender for the Gold Coast boot camp.

Through this legislation the Labor Party are still closing them down, so how do they justify that? They said they were relying on the advice in the KPMG report and closing them down, but the KPMG report recommended keeping them open. Again, this is all about just repealing legislation, reviewing legislation and not having an effective alternate policy to deal with these issues. The people who will suffer from this legislation tonight are the good folk of Queensland. Crime will increase, youth unemployment will increase, youth crime will increase and more people will have their cars stolen, particularly in the areas of Townsville and Cairns where this was rampant.

I remember going to Townsville and Cairns many years ago and listening to the people of Cairns tell me about these issues, and the Liberal National Party dealt with them. When I went back to Cairns and Townsville these issues were not raised. There was peace on the streets. I remember that in Cairns women were being assaulted and on numerous occasions they were harassed on the streets of Cairns. Once we passed the legislation and we got tough on crime, those issues subsided significantly. They will be on the increase again, because this Attorney-General, this employment minister and this skills and training minister have nothing on their minds other than repealing what the LNP did.

I saw the education minister in here before whinging and whining. She looks to her ministerial advisors on the side there, who give a laugh and say, 'Yes, good on you, Minister for Education!' 'That was a great interjection, Attorney-General!' They do not realise that the advice they have given tonight will put people in harm's way. It will mean that more cars will be stolen in Townsville, and they can have their silly little laughs back and forth, 'Good on you, Minister', just as you practised in the mirror this afternoon. That is how you do it! 'Good interjection, Minister for Training and Skills.' The fact is that under this Attorney-General and skills and training minister and under this employment minister, unemployment is rising in this state; apprenticeships are down in this state; and traineeships and skills are down in this state. That will lead to more unemployed kids, fewer kids with jobs and more crime in this state.