




Speech By
Ray Stevens


MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (5.57 pm): It is a sad day when we are discussing legislation which is basically badly costed and a knee-jerk reaction to a television program. This is exactly the same thing that ruined the cattle industry when Joe Ludwig—Labor son of the famous Bill Ludwig—reacted to an ABC show on live cattle export deaths overseas. It is exactly the same thing that happened in relation to greyhounds on the ABC when Mike Baird saw his popularity plummet through the floor after a knee-jerk reaction. Quite clearly this legislation is the Premier's response to the Northern Territory footage, and that is why we are here today with a knee-jerk reaction to a problem that should have been costed and dealt with in a proper and timely manner rather than this ridiculous situation. We could be spending \$400 million on a new facility, which is ridiculous. I am told that we could be spending \$44 million a year for 49 prisoners, which is absolutely ridiculous as well. If they want to go and give their parents a million when they are 15, they will be a lot better off waiting to keep the kid out of jail until they get older.

There is no logic whatsoever in the legislation we are considering. We have heard the bleeding heart stories from members on the other side of the House in relation to those 49 17-year-olds in proper prisons. They are not talking about shrinking violets; they are talking about prisoners who are in the system because they have done some extremely bad things against society. They are the worst, if you like. We have a policy in our judicial system, as the Attorney-General well knows, of keeping children out of jail. The Attorney-General should respect the decisions of the judges, because the only time these so-called kids get sent to these jails is when their actions have proven too much for them to be kept in society.

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (7.40 pm), continuing: Before the debate was adjourned I was advising the House of the ridiculous situation where we have this legislation being debated as a result of a knee-jerk reaction to a television show which was actually all about the Northern Territory. The old saying goes that when you act in haste you get to repent at leisure. In typical Labor fashion—

Mr SEENEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention to the state of the House.

(Quorum formed at 7.42 pm)

Mr STEVENS: I congratulate the Leader of Opposition Business on noticing the paucity of government members here after their extended dinner break, to the detriment of the debate in the Assembly. Unfortunately, it shows how they treat this very important piece of legislation that I am talking to tonight. Unfortunately, members of the government are not prepared to have a quorum to listen to my few words of wisdom.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr DICK: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! There are several points of order. I point out to the member on my left that if you are going to interject you must take your seat. What is your point of order, Minister?

Mr DICK: I take personal offence at those words. I ask that he withdraw. There are at least six members of the Liberal National Party opposition standing outside the chamber deliberately not in the chamber.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The words were not directed at the minister individually. He cannot take a point of order. He cannot take offence at a general statement, and he knows it. He knows what the rules are.

Mr STEVENS: To clarify my words, I made no mention of any individual in any capacity whatsoever.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member has taken offence and I ask you to withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You cannot do that. The minister cannot take offence unless he is individually named.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! If you wish to dispute my ruling, I ask you to write to the Speaker. The member for Mermaid Beach has the call.

Mr SEENEY: I give notice that I shall move dissent from your ruling. That is an absurd ruling. The member was not named individually and you cannot expect—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I warn you under standing order 253A for showing disrespect to the chair.

Notice of Motion, Dissent from Deputy Speaker's Ruling

Mr SEENEY: I give notice that I will move dissent from your ruling.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may wish to do so.

Mr STEVENS: In relation to the youth justice—

Mr SPEAKER: I understand a withdrawal has been requested. Will you withdraw?

Mr STEVENS: I withdraw. As I reiterated previously, the youth justice bill is a knee-jerk reaction to a television program related to matters that happened in the Northern Territory. Quite clearly, when you act in haste you repent at leisure. The Labor Party's answer to repenting at leisure will be to throw a truckload of money at this just as it did with the Health payroll system. The \$80 million or whatever it was that was originally planned for the Health payroll system turned out to be \$1.2 billion.

We have had some advice from the shadow opposition spokesperson on the matter that there may well be a \$400 million brand-new facility built for these 49 miscreants of society who have been sent to jail as a last resort as youths. We all know that the judiciary are very keen to keep these juveniles out of our prisons. However, at some point in time society says, through the judges, 'Get them out of society.' They are not innocent, shrinking violets, sweet little 17-year-olds in our jails. Some of the lads are bigger than me. They make me look like a tiddler.

We are going to take those serious criminals—and they are there because they are serious criminals—and we are going to put them into youth juvenile detention with 10- and 12-year-olds. The same thing will happen again. These serious criminals will have to be isolated from the juveniles in those youth detention centres. What we will end up with is another nightmare of mixing hardened, difficult young criminals—yes, they are 17—with 10-year-olds. They will be a very bad influence.

If this legislation passes, we are going to put these 49—I believe there are—17-year-old detainees in the same compound as juveniles. I find no logic and no sense in that at all. It will be another Labor failure that they will throw a lot more money at again and again. It will be exactly the same as the train disaster. There will be so much money thrown at this train disaster because it will be ongoing. For us it will be the gift that keeps on giving. I can assure members that I am looking forward to it.

The problem is that Queenslanders will pay through the nose and the Treasurer will get a sore hand writing cheques to fix up another Labor Party failed, ill-thought-out, mad scheme to address a problem that was not there. It was a Northern Territory problem where we all viewed the brief video clip of the problems with one particular 17-year-old in a Northern Territory jail.

The people in Townsville and Cairns—areas that are probably, I would say, over-represented by the Labor Party—will not be very happy at all about seeing this soft-on-crime-and-criminals government. They are already watering down the VLAD laws on the Gold Coast. We have seen our popularity go through the roof. I am giving the Labor Party members some free advice here. In the interests of the Gold Coast, in terms of crime and treating criminals—

Mr POWER: Mr Speaker, I rise to a point of order. It seems that he is breaching the standing orders on relevance and also pre-empting a debate before the House at the same time.

Mr SPEAKER: I ask the member to come back to the matter that we are debating.

Mr STEVENS: I was drawing the corollary and unfortunately I concentrated too much on other mistakes that the Labor Party have made rather than this one that they are making here tonight. For 49 miscreants, they are going to throw probably half a billion dollars at it by the time they are finished this exercise. That is Queensland taxpayers' money. The people in Cairns and Townsville will tell them what they think at the next election. I cannot wait for the next election. I lie awake at night thinking we will talk about youth justice at the next election. We will talk about crime and the treatment of these 17-year-olds.

Mr Dickson interjected.

Mr STEVENS: Exactly. The trains will still not be running on time, I am sure, at the next election. I think this is terrible legislation but it is typical legislation. I certainly will not be supporting the legislation before the House.