




Speech By  
**Ros Bates**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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Record of Proceedings, 3 November 2016

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

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (4.57 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Youth Justice and Other Legislation (Inclusion of 17-year-old Persons) Amendment Bill 2016. Here we are again, with this soft-on-crime Labor government going soft on youth crime and putting young people at risk. We all know that the LNP is the party of law and order, and nowhere is that more evident than on the issue of youth justice. Here we have a Labor government with no real plan or transitional arrangement, on an ideological basis seeking to put 17-year-old prisoners in detention alongside children as young as 10. This Labor government is putting at risk the safety of young people in youth detention with a change to the law that means that it cannot guarantee the safety of children in detention. Once again we have a Labor government with no plan and no idea, implementing a change with far-reaching implications, with no regard to whether it will work.

As the shadow minister for youth and child safety, I am deeply concerned about the consequences of this bill, particularly as the Carmody inquiry found that 72 per cent of children and young people in the youth justice system were known to Child Safety. I am deeply concerned for those young children in detention who now may be exposed to much older prisoners who are entering the youth justice system despite having previously been tried and convicted as adults. Of course, this is nothing new under this Labor government. We have already seen those opposite repeal, without any regard for its repercussions, the LNP's 2014 youth justice reforms. Our reforms included naming and shaming repeat youth offenders, making breach of bail an offence and making youth crimes for which no conviction was recorded admissible in court if that person is sentenced when they reach adulthood. Our reforms, which provided a deterrent for young offenders and instilled confidence in our youth justice system, were tossed aside under this soft-on-crime Labor government. In doing so, there was no discussion and no consultation by this government.

Despite their love of reviews, there was no review when it came to repealing our youth justice reforms. What we are continuing to see with this bill is a lack of detail surrounding Labor's plan for youth detention. As we on this side of the House know from effectively managing our youth justice system during our time in government, youth detention is a complex issue. Sufficient planning and consideration needs to be in place before major changes, such as those that this bill would implement, are made.

Under this government we still see no plan and no transitional process outlined to manage the delicate process of transitioning 17-years-olds in detention to being detained alongside much younger children. Of course, then we have the cost. As is always the case under this Labor government and Labor governments of the past, we see a grand policy announcement with no plan to pay for it. We have a bill that will significantly increase the pressure on our youth detention system in Queensland and no detail from this government on how they will fund it.

We have seen the government outline an annual cost of \$44 million to bring less than 50 17-year-olds into youth detention, coupled with a possible new \$400 million youth detention centre. Despite this nearly half a billion dollar potential cost of this bill, we still have no indication from this government on what the final cost will be. From the start these reforms have been rushed and pushed through this parliament with no regard for those who are affected, no plan to mitigate the consequences, no plan for a transition and no idea of the cost.

In regional areas in particular we are seeing the impact of this government's policies. It is our youth in our communities that are suffering as a result. We have seen concerns raised that this government has introduced no plans to counteract the spread of youth crime and continues to ignore the way this issue is affecting regional areas.

In Townsville, where I visited just a few weeks ago, we had the Townsville Crime Alerts and Discussions group stating before a committee of this parliament that there have been no new policies and no new reforms to combat juvenile crime. Instead, in the words of the group, all we have seen is a government 'trying to squash the previous government's reforms which were put in place by the LNP because the public had had enough'.

This is an issue this government has time and time again failed to get right, putting our young people and communities at risk. The former LNP government had a plan which we were implementing to deter youth offenders and make our communities safer. Unfortunately, we have yet to see the same under this Labor government and it is our youth who will suffer the most.