




Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2016

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

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (12.00 am): I rise to contribute to the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bills of 2015 and 2016. Whilst I acknowledge the time of the morning, I would like to take this opportunity to also place on the record my sincere condolences to the family of British Labor MP Jo Cox. Like most members, I read the tragic news overnight. I believe that she had two young children. A couple of hours ago I phoned my youngest son and wished him a good night. Sadly Jo Cox will not have that opportunity. I convey to her family and friends my deepest and sincerest condolences.

Unlike the LNP the Labor Party are soft on crime. When I was here in the 54th Parliament sitting in a chair over there was the former member for Mundingburra, David Crisafuli, who got up and repeatedly talked about the specific issue of car theft and more car theft every Friday night or thereabouts in Townsville. It was something that he was passionate about. It was not just the incidents of car theft in Townsville, but down in Broadbeach we also had the issue of vicious lawless motorcycle gangs. Whether it was at one end of the state or the other we responded to both. Admittedly, this soft on crime approach should not be a complete surprise because we have seen over the last 17 months Labor's approach not just to youth justice and law and disorder but pretty much to all of our decisions. When it is broken down, all those opposite have done is push forward with undoing what the former LNP government did in government simply based on ideological opposition. It is all part of their quest to simply airbrush the Newman LNP government from the pages of history.

The sign of a mature government is to take a measure of public policies and to cherry-pick the ones that ideologically you choose to have the battles with, not simply undo them for the sake of undoing them. Instead of letting the changes made to the Youth Justice Act in 2014 have a real chance to work, the Labor Party are repealing the amendments based on simple ideological grounds to try to undo the reform work of the previous LNP government in the 54th Parliament.

Mrs Frecklington: No plans!

Mr MINNIKIN: I will take the interjection from the deputy opposition leader. They have no plan to reduce youth crime other than going back to their failed policies of the past. If these policies actually worked there would have been no need to make the changes that the LNP did back in 2014. That is a fact. Should this bill proceed to be passed we will see in no uncertain terms the removal of boot camp orders from the range of sentencing options for children, the removal of name-and-shame provisions, the removal of breach of bail as an offence for children, making childhood findings of guilt for which no conviction was recorded inadmissible in court when sentencing a person for an adult offence, as well as the closure of the Childrens Magistrates Court when hearing all youth justice matters under the Childrens Court Act 1992.

Based on the most recent figures found in the Childrens Court of Queensland 2014-15 annual report, I want to talk about evidence because I do note that the Attorney-General advised in her explanatory speech—

Reducing youth crime in Queensland is a priority for this government. That is why we are repealing these amendments and adopting an evidence based approach to reducing youth offending.

Running with that logic of an evidence based approach I will read for the benefit of the House what Michael Shanahan noted—

The trend line in relation to the ten year comparison of the number of juvenile defendants disposed of in all of Queensland courts shows a slight increase, although in 2014-15 there was an 8.7 per cent decrease from the previous year.

It is evident that the amendments made by the LNP in 2014 are arguably the stimulus for the results in the 2014-15 report. As I say, is this not an evidence based approach? Rather than letting these pesky changes stay and looking for statistically significant results from the perspective of the ALP, they have chosen to repeal the amendments without any proper review. I must ask how can the government state the legislation as it stands right now is not working? How can the government say it does not work if it has not been allowed the opportunity to be appropriately put to use? How can the government say it does not work if they have not even reviewed it? Furthermore, how can they claim to be getting tough on crime when they have not introduced any new policies or reforms in regard to youth crime in 17 months?

Instead they are doing what they do so well. They are recycling very old, very outdated, dusted-off policies. Then again, in their heart of hearts the ALP never really wanted these reforms to work. The KPMG evaluation of the LNP trial of youth boot camps recommended that the Gold Coast youth boot camp be open as a trial site. The report stated—

It is recommended that the Gold Coast continues as a pilot for a further period of time, with changes to the referral process to ensure a broader range of pathways into the program and potentially expanding the eligibility criteria to increase the intake of young people who have been subject to youth justice conferencing or a supervised statutory order.

It went on to say further—

There is a clear identified need for an intervention to help stop the 'revolving door' of offending for a cohort of young people, who are repeat offenders and who have been in detention a number of times with no discernible impact on their re-offending rate.

Rather than heeding the advice of a most reputable company, the ALP instead closed the whole trial down—they shut it down—ignoring the independent evaluation for another illustration of cynical, political revenge. I am gobsmacked at the disregard and disrespect the ALP have towards LNP legislation. I repeat: it is simply not good politics from any government to block and repeal decisions of a former government without first allowing them to have time to work. At least give them time to work. Prove the efficacy one way or another. The art of government is to pick the real issues and then maximise your differences. It would be impracticable and fiscally irresponsible of every government to simply use this playbook each and every time. I wonder if amendments put in by the ALP to other legislation would be repealed less than two years later without statistically significant data or a proper review.

Whilst in government the LNP had a four-point plan to address youth justice in Queensland. We believe young people should be held accountable for their actions and face consequences for their offences; Queenslanders simply deserve safer communities—one of the essential tenets of any government is to be fiscally responsible economically but to look after the safety of its citizens; the third precept is that young people deserve the opportunity to turn their lives around—a very important point; and, fourthly, we need to close the revolving door of detention centres once and for all.

One thing we share is the belief that youth crime is a truly serious issue. It needs to be seriously addressed. We took pragmatic steps to tackle youth crime in this state, regardless of where it occurred. Now the ALP is ignorantly repealing the amendments that we put in place in the 54th Parliament. It is one thing to repeal amendments if there is evidence of their failures, but it is another thing yet again to repeal them due to pressure from union donors. This time I will not say Labor is frozen at the wheel; I will say that they are stuck in reverse. It is for those reasons that I am unable to support these bills.