



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Record of Proceedings, 3 November 2016

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

Mr MANDER (Everton—LNP) (5.02 pm): I rise to speak on the Youth Justice and Other Legislation (Inclusion of 17-year-old Persons) Amendment Bill. I will be speaking against the bill. This bill typifies this Labor government's soft-on-crime approach. This bill shows that this Labor government is all about moral posturing and has no concern for practical implications. This bill shows that this Labor government is concerned about symbolism and not about community expectations. Probably most worrying is that this bill shows that this Palaszczuk Labor government is more concerned about the perpetrators of crime than the victims of crime.

Mr Harper: How did the boot camps go?

Mr MANDER: I will take that interjection and come back to boot camps in a moment. This government's record on youth justice is disgraceful. It is no coincidence that the youth crime rates in this state, particularly in regional areas—and particularly in this local member's area of Townsville and Thuringowa—have increased dramatically since this government has reversed the youth justice reforms that the LNP government introduced. As the shadow Attorney-General said earlier, these laws and reforms were introduced because the community was sick to the back teeth of continually living in fear on the streets and in their homes, particularly in Townsville and Cairns.

Mr Walker: And they're back to that again.

Mr MANDER: I take the interjection from the shadow Attorney-General. They are back to that again. We have a serious youth crime issue in this state.

In the *Townsville Bulletin* of 17 May 2016 Superintendent Glenn Kachel from the Townsville police stated—

We have a hardcore group of recidivist offenders who we are constantly dealing with ... 43% of our top 100 property crime offenders are aged 11-16.

What have they done?

Mr Harper interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Thuringowa, the member for Everton is not taking your interjections. I would like to hear him.

Mr MANDER: This is what they have done. We made breach of bail an offence. Any common-sense person would say that that is a smart thing to do. What did they do? They reversed that. We said that no longer should incarceration be included in the law as a last resort for repeat offenders. What did they do? They reversed that. We said that some of these repeat offenders, some of these hardened youth offenders who have stolen 80, 90, 100 cars should be named and shamed. We also said that we need to look at other ways of dealing with some of these youth offenders. We said we need

early intervention and diversionary programs. That is why we introduced the boot camps—the boot camps that were never given a full opportunity to be proven effective, despite some very promising signs. What has happened now?

Government members interjected.

Mr MANDER: I take the interjections from the members opposite. What has happened now is that the government realises that boot camps are an option, but the only thing is that they do not like the name 'boot camps'. What name do they use? In typical Labor fashion they call them 'culturally appropriate adventure learning programs'.

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mr MANDER: In brackets. I will take that interjection from my colleague from Whitsunday. That is what has happened. They have again refused to accept that the reforms that we brought in were effective and instead are now trying to use politically correct terms to change that.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Everton—

Mrs D'Ath interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney-General! Member for Everton, you are provoking them. I ask that government members cease interjecting. Let us hear the member speak, please.

Mr MANDER: What has happened now is that we have a revolving door youth justice system in this state, particularly in Townsville and Cairns. There is nothing more frustrating for a police officer than to arrest a juvenile offender for a break and enter one night and then the next night arrest the same offender for stealing a motor vehicle. The people of Townsville and Cairns in particular are sick to death of this.

What was the response from this government? Initially there was not a problem, but obviously they did some polling in Townsville and realised that they are on the nose up there, particularly when it comes to law and order. All of a sudden we have a snap cabinet meeting up there for a week—

Mr Costigan interjected.

Mr MANDER: I take that interjection from the member for Whitsunday. The red army decided to spend a week there. Then we had some of the most innovative crime-fighting strategies ever heard of. The first one was 15 police recruits doing a doorknocking campaign.

Mr Costigan: No, they stole it from the Salvos.

Mr MANDER: There was some confusion about who it was. They were knocking on doors reminding people that it is their fault that their cars were getting knocked off and it is their fault that their houses were being broken into.

Once they realised how ridiculous that policy was and saw the response from the community they then decided that they were going to have a fly-in fly-out strike force. Some 30 extra police would come in for 30 days. Let us make this look good. Let us increase the number of arrests we have had. After 30 days they will go away and hope that nobody remembers that we had an issue there. I can tell the House that the residents of Cairns and Townsville do know that there is still an issue there, and they are sick of it.

Then they needed to think of something else. They saw the emergency services helicopter in the garage and said, 'Let's get that out there and pretend it's a police helicopter'—without any equipment, without anything appropriate whatsoever. Now we have police hanging out of a helicopter with their binoculars, looking down to see if they can see any crime in Townsville! It is absolutely ridiculous. What we know on this side of the House is that our police do a fantastic job. Policing is not the issue. The issue is the law, the legal framework that these police have to work within. They are also completely frustrated by this.

I argued that the decision by this soft-on-crime Labor government to transfer 17-year-olds out of the adult prison system is a knee-jerk reaction without due consideration. What happened is that the Premier, on the very rare occasion that she went on talkback radio, was asked a difficult question and then suddenly there is a \$400 million investment being announced without any consideration whatsoever. This is a simplistic response to a very, very complex issue.

There are good reasons for the current laws. They have been supported for years by both sides of government. Why would we want to mix hardened 17-year-old criminals with children as young as 10? Why would we want to do that? It makes absolutely no sense at all. Let us think of the logic of this. We have 17-year-olds in the adult prison system at the moment and they are segregated and kept

separate. What is the solution? We are now going to move 17-year-olds into the youth justice system and have them segregated and kept separate. It is exactly the same thing but in a different context, and it is going to cost us \$44 million a year probably—maybe more—and probably a capital investment of around \$400 million. It is absolutely ridiculous. It is no wonder that when those investment decisions are made those on the other side of the House clocked up nearly \$80 billion of debt. We will watch that figure go up as we see more and more decisions like this implemented.

There needs to be a major review of the structure of the Queensland justice system. We have not had one in over 30 years. We need to look at this complex issue and give it due consideration, not a simple knee-jerk reaction. The profiles of 17-year-old offenders vary greatly. You have different levels of emotional maturity, you have varying physical capabilities and you have various degrees of offences committed. A 17-year-old convicted and incarcerated for car theft should be treated differently from a 17-year-old who has committed violent crimes like murder and rape. I do not think the public will be happy with murderers at 17 years of age going back into the youth justice system.

Mr Costigan: They'd be aghast.

Mr MANDER: They would be aghast. What is going to happen now is that 17-year-olds will be given more protection from incarceration. We will wait and see what the people of Townsville and Cairns think about that when they hear that the changes to the youth justice system mean that there will be an increased ability to divert people from the court system. They have already lost confidence in the government. When they see this bill, introduced once again by this Attorney-General, that confidence will be even lower.