




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

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (10.30 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. At the outset, if I could seek a momentary indulgence of the House, I would like to join both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in paying tribute to Jo Cox MP, the parliamentarian who unfortunately lost her life earlier this morning. I would like to extend my condolences to her family and her colleagues. All of us have an obligation, no matter what our politics and what it is that we stand for, to stand tall in the fight for the freedoms that each and every one of us hold dear. MPs across not only Queensland, Australia and indeed the world must be accessible to the people whom they seek to represent. It is quite distressing that an MP who was simply going about representing her community has been killed in her prime.

The response that we must take to ideas that we do not support and to ideologies that we fundamentally disagree with is to have a better argument. The response is to ensure that through argument and alternative proposals we can ensure a strong, open and participatory democracy. We as a society and a community must never, ever take for granted the freedoms and the liberties that not only each and every one of us in this House hold so dear but also our foremen and forewomen fought for and sacrificed their lives for. We must be strong in our resolve as we stand up for freedom of speech and freedom of expression. I thank the House for that indulgence.

In turning to the bills, as we have seen and has been highlighted by the shadow Attorney-General, this is another attempt by this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government to 'de-Newman-ise' the state of Queensland. This is another attempt by this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government to turn back the clock with no evidence and without seeking a mandate from the people of Queensland. As we know, more people in Queensland voted for the LNP than for the Labor Party. This is a continued track record of this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government to 'de-Newman-ise' this state and to turn back the clock.

This government is seeking to remove boot camp orders from not only vehicle offenders but from a range of sentencing options that are there for juvenile offenders. In 2013 I had the privilege of joining my colleagues, the member for Coomera, the member for Albert and the member for Burleigh to travel to the Scenic Rim—and I acknowledge the member for Beaudesert has been a strong advocate for this particular entity—to visit the Kokoda Challenge Early Intervention Youth Boot Camp. I had an opportunity to meet not only with those adults who are trying to make a difference in young people's lives but also with some of the young people who were participating in that program at that time. They said to me, the member for Coomera, the member for Albert and the member for Burleigh that they appreciated that this boot camp was giving them another opportunity. It recognised that, yes, they had made mistakes and, yes, there needed to be consequences, but where appropriate boot camps were

a viable option to make sure that we could help young people and at-risk young people get back on track. I am incredibly disappointed, as I am sure the Townsville region is, that we have a government that, in its attempt to 'de-Newman-ise' this state, is removing the option of youth boot camp orders.

It is incredibly disappointing that, in its attempt to roll back what were very good reforms that were aimed at ensuring the safety of our community by having an appropriate and measured response to youth offending, this government has failed to acknowledge the wants and the needs of the Townsville community. I acknowledge the member for Burdekin, the shadow agriculture minister and a former police officer in this great state. I know that the member for Burdekin will touch not only on his experiences as a resident of the greater Townsville region but also in particular on his experiences as a hardworking Queensland Police Service officer. It is appropriate as well to put on the record my appreciation of the hardworking QPS officers across the state who do a fantastic job of keeping our communities safe each and every day.

In the proposal that is being considered by the House at the moment we see the determination by this government to close the Childrens Court. One of the things that is oft said and is particularly true is that justice must be seen to be done. If the broader community are going to have confidence in our justice system and how it reacts—particularly when we consider, as has been highlighted by my friend and colleague the member for Beaudesert, that a small proportion of people are responsible for a significant percentage of crimes—we need to make sure that people in our community are able to see justice being done and have faith and confidence in the system. It is absolutely critical that people have faith and confidence in the system. To that end it is also disappointing that we are also seeing the removal of the principle that detention is a last resort. Ultimately, when a crime has been committed, where appropriate and severe enough, a custodial sentence must be deemed appropriate. The community want and expect that. We have heard time and time again that the community is frustrated with how criminals are being leniently treated in this state. This is an asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government continuing to go weak on crime in this state.

It is very disappointing that a government that claims to be consultative, that says that it wants to listen to and talk to the people of Queensland, has not taken an opportunity to take on board not only the wants and needs of the broader Townsville region but also the wants and needs of Queenslanders who generally are saying that they do not think that the sentencing regime in Queensland is tough enough. As I said, we must keep in mind that sometimes detention is appropriate and there will be circumstances, and I acknowledge that, where detention may not be appropriate, but we should not take off the table this notion that at the first instance in some circumstances detention will be appropriate.

As I mentioned earlier in my contribution, we see that this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government is continuing to go soft on crime, whether or not it is their intention to repeal the sentencing boot camp option, whether or not it is their intention to repeal the provisions that provide for sentencing and suggest that a custodial sentence must be a last resort or whether or not—and this is particularly important for my community on the Gold Coast—it is their intention to repeal the very popular, very tough and working anti-criminal motorcycle gang and anti-organised crime legislation in this state. That is evidence that this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government is going soft on crime and is not listening to the people of Queensland. We have seen consistently that this government does not wish to listen to the people of Queensland. We have seen consistently that all they want to do is have a talkfest. They just want to sit down, hold hands and sing *Kumbaya*.

Mr Minnikin: Have a review, have a review, have a review.

Miss BARTON: They want to have a review into everything. However, the reality is that the time for governing has come. The time for hard decisions has come. Whether it is the youth justice legislation or the attempt by this government later down the track to weaken our resolve against organised crime in Queensland, we have seen that this government has squibbed it. It has squibbed it because this government is asleep at the wheel. They are not listening to the people of Queensland. They are not taking an opportunity to give them a say.

When the committee was going through its inquiry process into the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, it went to Townsville. As those of us who were in the last parliament would know, Townsville had been calling out for tough measures. They had had significant problems, particularly with respect to vehicle offences. The Townsville community was screaming out for action, just as the Gold Coast community had screamed out for action against criminal motorcycle gangs. We saw a government prepared to make a decision. It was prepared to take a stand and it was prepared to deliver not only for the Townsville community, which was struggling with juvenile offenders who were committing crimes against vehicles, but also for the Gold Coast community, which was dealing with criminal motorcycle gangs. The former government was prepared to listen and to take action. It is not

the LNP who squibbed it in the face of crime in this state. It is not the LNP who squibbed it when the community asked the government to be tough on crime. As I say, it is this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government that has squibbed any opportunity to make sure that there is an appropriate response to the problem of juvenile crime in Queensland.

When young Queenslanders who might be vulnerable have taken a wrong turn along the way, it is appropriate that we give them a chance and an opportunity to restore their lives. If they can make a difference in their lives, they may have the opportunity to better themselves and to contribute to their community. I pay tribute to Project Booyah, which is a program that—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order!, I am finding it very hard to hear the member for Broadwater. Could members please keep their conversations to a minimum.

Miss BARTON: Thank you for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker. Project Booyah is a program that the Gold Coast members of parliament would be very aware of and, indeed, have been very supportive of. Ahead of the 2015 election, I joined my Gold Coast colleagues to collectively send a message to the then treasurer and now Leader of the Opposition, the member for Clayfield, that we wanted to support this program because we wanted to be able to make sure that young people had an opportunity to turn their lives around. Project Booyah has done just that. It is appropriate to put on the record my thanks to Kenton Campbell from Zarraffa's. He has worked very closely with the Queensland Police Service and the Gold Coast Police Citizens Youth Club to provide an education for young Queenslanders who need someone to guide them and to tell them that they are valued, that they have a place in our society and that they really have an opportunity to turn their lives around. Project Booyah has been particularly successful in doing that. It is a prime example of how the community, the government and private enterprise can work together to make sure that young vulnerable Queenslanders have an opportunity to get back on the straight and narrow.

One of the other things that I am particularly proud of when it comes to the LNP wanting to make sure that young people have an opportunity is, of course, our plan to get young Queenslanders back into work. As we know, making sure that they have employment opportunities is a key and critical part of making sure that they not only feel valued but also have direction in their lives. We know that this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government does not think that it can do anything about youth unemployment. We know that this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government does not have a plan to address youth unemployment, unlike the LNP. I pay tribute to the former attorney-general, who was the architect of these great reforms when we were in government. Alongside the Leader of the Opposition, he was the architect of a genuine strategy to ensure that young people have an opportunity in this state. As a society and a government, we need to be able to do that. We need to say to young people that they are valued, that they are worthy, that someone wants to give them an opportunity to get back on the right path and that they can get back on the straight and narrow.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The volume is getting quite high. Again, I am finding it very hard to hear the member for Broadwater. I know it is getting very late, but could members please try to keep their interjections and conversations to a minimum.

Miss BARTON: Again, Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for your protection. In the time remaining, I acknowledge the members who represented the Townsville region in the last government: John Hathaway, the member for Townsville; Sam Cox, the member for Thuringowa; David Crisafulli, the member for Mundingburra; Rosemary Menkens, the member for Burdekin; and Andrew Cripps, the member for Hinchinbrook. Those members stood up for their communities. Those members were prepared to stand up and say, 'In the face of a youth crime problem in our city, we want the government to do something.' Our government did not squib the opportunity to send a message, not only to the Townsville community but also to the broader Queensland community, that we were not going to be tolerant of such behaviour. We showed leadership, because someone needed to. What we have seen is this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government—

Government members interjected.

Miss BARTON: Just because they like it so much, I will repeat it: what we have seen is this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government failing to show leadership when it comes not only to responding to the wants and needs of the broader Townsville community in dealing with—and I know that the member for Burdekin will touch on this—a very serious and significant issue but also more broadly when it comes to being tough on crime and I again mention organised crime, which is relevant to my electorate on the Gold Coast. We made sure that we did not squib it. We showed leadership. We stood up for the people of Queensland and we stood tall in the fight against not only organised crime but also significant rates of youth recidivism.

One of the things I was particularly pleased about was that we were able to deliver for the Gold Coast region an early intervention youth boot camp. We have seen that it makes a difference in people's lives. It makes people feel like there is hope. It makes people feel like they have a chance. What this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government has done, by squibbing an opportunity to stand tall and show leadership, is fail to show the young people of Queensland that (1) they are valued, (2) they have an opportunity, (3) they have a future and (4) they have hope. That is what it is about.

It is not just about hope for those young offenders or those vulnerable young people who might be about to go down the wrong path. It is about sending the broader community hope that the government will stand tall in the face of the battle against crime—that we will not have a government that is soft on crime.

What we have seen time and time again is this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government squib any opportunity to show leadership when it comes to dealing with crime. They are weak on crime. They do not listen to the people of Queensland. They have failed to deliver not only for the people of Townsville but also for the people of Queensland more broadly when it comes to sending a message on crime, when it comes to saying to young people we think there is hope and opportunity and to the people of Queensland where someone has done the wrong thing we will respond appropriately and in the best of interests of all Queenslanders. This asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government has squibbed it.