




Speech By
Hon. Bill Byrne

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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

 **Hon. WS BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services) (12.10 am): I am very excited to be speaking on these bills. Tonight what we have seen from the opposition is more slogans and blistering ignorance. Let us put some facts on the table. In the 2011 campaign, the Liberal National Party came out and talked about boot camps. I can remember the candidate in Rockhampton talking about boot camps. What were those boot camps? They were military style, heavy discipline, hit them with a bigger hammer, treat them rough, keep them keen. That was the sort of stuff that was going around during the campaign. This notion that in 2011-12 the Liberal National Party campaigned on boot camps with anything approaching evidence based attention to juvenile justice is a complete nonsense. Everyone across the table who worked on the 2011-12 campaign knows that full well. It was all revealed with the emergence of the then star from outside the chamber, because they could not find anyone inside the chamber to be the leader of the opposition. Do members remember that fellow's name? It was Newman. He was in Cairns when he launched the boot camp strategy. Do members remember that? We have had some road-smash press conferences in recent times. I see the member for Mansfield is not here.

A government member: There he is.

Mr BYRNE: He is here; I am sorry. Newman stood up in Cairns to answer the first question, which was, 'Can you give evidence or any example of where boot camps have worked anywhere in the world?' What was the answer from the leading light from outside the chamber who was then leading the opposition? He said, 'No, I can't do that, but my adviser, the bloke down the back there, he knows about it. Go and ask him.' That was pretty much what went on for the next two years. It is somewhat ironic that, having won government in a landslide, they announced \$2 million for a boot camp trial, but it was 2014 before they brought the issue into the House. It was 2014 before we could interrogate anyone at estimates. There was two years of doing nothing. What happened in those two years? There was an escalation.

What about the crime statistics following their intervention? It is a fact that the now opposition and then government would not even publish crime statistics. They hid the crime statistics. Jack sat over here, trying to defend a circumstance in which crime statistics would no longer be published while they were in government. Apparently, things were going so well that they decided not to publish crime statistics. No-one else could see them because it was going so well.

As a result of what was going on in Townsville, that group across the chamber were running around like chooks with their heads cut off, trying to craft something from a policy position that was a vacuum. They had nothing. They had won the election, but they had nothing except a slogan and they tried to craft a solution out of it. They said, 'How do we make the slogan "boot camp" work and fit into something that might actually deliver a result?' That cost \$2 million.

Let us journey a little further down the track. We ended up with \$16 million or thereabouts being expended. The \$2 million trial in their juvenile justice program was concluded, but there was no report, there was no evidence and nothing was put on the table. The trial was so successful that not a piece of documentation was anywhere to be seen, and on that basis they spent \$16 million. They ramped up the trial, even though there was absolutely nothing to support the trial being a success. There was no material whatsoever in the public domain. There was no report and no evaluation. There was zero, zip. They poured \$16 million into it and then we saw the roadkill that came out of that, which was the Auditor-General's report. I wish I had had that Auditor-General's report in the 2014 estimates.

Those of us who were here at that time would remember the 2014 estimates. They tried to run every committee virtually at the same time, to stretch the opposition. At estimates, the Attorney-General was unable to explain what had gone on in his tender process. In the end, to the shock of one and all present, he had his director-general throw the department under a bus, which is the only way I can describe it. Sosso was his name. He threw the department under a bus. I did not expect to see a director-general throwing a department under a bus, asking them to explain the boot camp tender process, but that is what he did. You should have seen the faces of the senior bureaucrats sitting behind the Attorney-General and his director-general! They showed absolute shock and horror. Their efforts had been to try to craft something sensible out of this nonsense sound-bite policy, which was a slogan that had all the depth that we see from the Liberal National Party. We have seen it tonight. They think it is funny. It is all 'soft on crime', 'hard on crime'. That is about all the attention span the Liberal National Party has on these issues.

The evidence about what needs to be done for youth crime, youth justice and the justice system is mountainous. There is about the same volume of evidence as there is for alcohol fuelled evidence, but evidence is not a strong point for the opposition. The Liberal National Party never distort a good story for the sake of a few facts, but that evidence is out there. This legislation is based on what evidence and experts say. Even though the member for Coomera opposes these bills, he stood in the House and tried to make a coherent position out of fact. Apart from the fact that he opposes the bills, his contribution was based in an element of reality. This evening, very few others on the other side of the chamber said anything that even vaguely approaches an appreciation of the issues at play here.

There are years and years of heavy-duty academic and practical work that demonstrate what needs to be done in terms of juvenile justice. I assure the House that a boot camp, in military-style jargon—a sound-bite philosophy, which is what we are seeing from those opposite—is not the solution. The solution is the evidence that supports these bills. When the Attorney-General says that this is evidence based, it is evidence based.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Crawford): Order! Minister, I need to quieten down the House. Members are all getting a little excited at this time of night.

Mr BYRNE: I am excited, because of the level of ignorance demonstrated by those opposite. Newman put this argument in 2011 and 2012, but he could not explain it. After almost three years in government, finally in 2014 they put a bill before the House. They said they did not have enough time to see whether or not the boot camp would work. They did not bother to do a report on the \$2 million trial. Do members remember that \$2 million trial? Where is the report? When we were in opposition, there was no report. Why did we throw \$16 million into this program? Because there was panic in the government! The numbers were going through the roof. They would not publish the crime statistics, they would not account to this House and they certainly would not account through the estimates process. In 2014, they tried to craft this thing. The then attorney-general threw mountains of money into it. Tonight, they come in here, oppose these bills and have the gall to suggest that they had some sort of plan.

They had no idea when they started. They had no idea throughout the process. They have no idea today. That is evidenced by those committee members who sat through the hearings. Members should have a look at the statement of reservation. It is sloganistic. It is not based on sense. It is complete and utter nonsense. People who understand the facts of this issue will look at the opposition's contribution and say it is shameful.

I heard unions mentioned a couple of times. I am not going to finish without this point. The member for Everton was in Townsville at that community meeting and did not say boo. He did not get up and make his contribution. He did not say anything like he said this evening—not a word. He sat down the back as quiet as a church mouse.

He is very keen to talk to somebody. He is very keen to talk to the unions. He is making approaches to talk to the unions about prisons. All of a sudden I find out that he is very keen about unions. I hope he gets to talk to a few more.