




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 6 September 2017

MOTION: YOUTH OFFENDERS, ORDER FOR PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.15 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the honourable member for Mansfield. I know just how worried my community will be about this sneaky plan of this Labor government to solve its overcrowding issue by emptying inmates from the two youth detention centres and setting up accommodation centres in suburban areas, potentially in and around the town of Bundaberg. We all know that Labor are soft on crime. They are soft on crime, and our residents deserve answers.

We all know that Labor has a sneaky plan to empty its jails of 17-year-olds and house them in our streets, in our neighbourhoods. This is another thought bubble—a dangerous Labor plan that raises more questions than answers. Yes, our youth detention centres are overcrowded. They are overcrowded because Labor has done nothing to redress the problem—nothing—and just hoped the problem would go away. This is further evidence of Labor's failed youth detention policy.

Now Labor thinks it can fix the problem by emptying its jails and putting those youth in our suburbs. This government is clearly so desperate to solve youth detention centre overcrowding issues that it is willing to let the youth loose on our streets, into our neighbourhoods and into our suburban shopping centres, parks and main streets. I know that the people of Bundaberg and the surrounds of Burnett will not be impressed at the thought of youth offenders living next door to them. I hold grave concerns for the welfare of our families, elderly residents and those young and old who live alone in our communities who could find themselves living next door to these—

Mrs D'Ath: Shame on you.

Mr BENNETT: Shame on me for sticking up for my community. I will take that interjection, thank you very much.

The fact that we have these juvenile offenders being housed in overflowing adult prisons in the first place is evidence that they have committed extensive or serious crimes and this government has failed. Alarm bells should be ringing. This will clearly create more problems for policing and our entire community. We can expect to see a rise in crime, including break and enters and illicit drugs use. These people are not angels. I ask this government to explain just how they are going to keep my constituents safe. This is an ill-thought-out plan and we need an explanation.

This Labor government has not been up-front with the community. Why the secrecy? Why hasn't there been any community consultation whatsoever? I guess we know the answer to that. Of course those opposite will not be honest with the people of Queensland because it will not be popular. I ask those members opposite whether they would want a violent offender awaiting sentencing living next door to them. I bet I know the answer to that. We have already seen that in South Brisbane with the intervention of the Deputy Premier. I have spoken with Bundaberg and Burnett residents and business owners who are shocked to hear that these supposed bail houses could exist in the region. Local business owners say that there is enough crime to battle already. Some raise concerns that they would have to invest in more security measures, which is an added expense that they simply cannot afford.

There are key questions that deserve answers. What homes in our suburbs are going to be rented by the government and where? What sort of security and surveillance will be in place? Will there be any sort of consultation with local residents or local council representatives? Will there be any consultation with local members of parliament? I am very concerned about any plans for the community that I represent, the community of Bundaberg and the wider Burnett regions. It is no secret that the Attorney-General let the cat out of the bag during estimates by saying that she was confident of being able to ease overcrowding at the state's two youth detention centres, which are virtually full.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I apologise, member for Burnett. There is too much chatter in the chamber and I am having difficulty following you.

Mr BENNETT: The problem is that we have been given no details on how this will be achieved, except that it now appears that Labor is going to set up holding centres in our suburbs. The obvious questions for the Attorney-General and the Premier to answer are: how many and where? How many suburban houses are being commissioned and what are the locations? These questions deserve answers. This is so typical of Labor: no genuine plan, no consultation and no details. Queenslanders are sick of the culture of secrecy of this government. Is it any wonder that Queenslanders are concerned about their safety? I warn Queenslanders that this Labor policy is coming to a street near them. This is clearly yet another soft-on-crime policy that will cost our community. It will put our entire community at risk, and I am not willing to take that risk on behalf of our community.

I commend the motion to support the listing of housing locations for supervised bail accommodation options for youth offenders by noon on Thursday, 21 September 2017 because our community deserves to know where these community housing bail detention centres will be built. Our communities deserve the consultation that has been promised over many, many years from this Labor government. We deserve to know about future youth detention policies because clearly this Labor government has failed on all those levels.