




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (5.01 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. There is no doubt that the government wanted this bill debated this sitting week rather than in Townsville where the Labor government has a problem with crime, particularly youth crime. At the outset, we heard that the LNP will not oppose the bill. I do commend the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Toowoomba South, for his contribution to the debate and for the amendments he will move on behalf of the LNP opposition. The LNP will move amendments to restrict the length of time that children can be in watch houses to 72 hours and to restore breach of bail as an offence.

The issue that strikes me with this bill is the lack of practical planning on the government's part. The general president and CEO of the Queensland Police Union, Ian Leavers, really hit the nail on the head with an editorial in the *Queensland Police Union Journal*. In the April-May edition, Mr Leavers said of 17-year-olds moving into the youth justice system—

We needed proper planning and modelling before we transferred an entire cohort of offenders into the juvenile system. The Youth Justice Minister Di Farmer has clearly done nothing. No planning. No modelling. Nothing. What makes it even more of a failing is that companies like McDonald's restaurants can undertake proper planning and modelling for population growth. Why can't Youth Justice Minister Di Farmer do the same for the transition of 17-year-olds to juvenile detention centres? As a result of the Youth Justice Minister's inability to do her job, now we will have more juveniles than adults in the Brisbane watch house.

They were Ian Leavers's comments in his editorial article. It begs the question: if McDonald's can do its planning, why can the government not do it for the transition of those 17-year-olds into youth detention? It stands to reason that children need to be detained in appropriate facilities such as youth detention facilities; however, under Labor it is alleged that children as young as 10 have been held in watch houses for weeks on end while they wait for available space in the overcrowded detention centres.

Since the revelations—and particularly the revelations on *Four Corners*—children have been held in watch houses. There is a significant concern around the length of time that these children were held. We understand that the longest time that it is alleged a child has stayed in the watch house is 45 days. Labor should be absolutely ashamed of the conditions in which children were kept. That should not happen in Queensland. That is the sort of thing that happens in Third World countries. It should not happen in Queensland. This is why the LNP is moving amendments to restrict the length of time that children are held in watch houses to 72 hours.

Children need to be held in appropriate detention centres where they can receive the support that they require. It is obvious that this Labor government is weakening the bail laws in this bill in an attempt to reduce the number of children entering those overcrowded youth detention centres. This Labor government has made these amendments to help take the pressure off Labor's youth detention centre crisis, sparked because of its failed transition of those 17-year-olds from adult prisons to the youth detention system in 2016.

Under Labor's bill, more youths who commit serious offences will put the community at risk. The frustration in the community is already out there in terms of youth crime. This is borne out in an email that my office received yesterday from Brad and Helen Hubbard. This is some of what the Hubbards had to say about youth crime—

I write to you as a concerned citizen of Chinchilla. A local minister and friend of mine called about how he had his house invaded and his car stolen a few weeks ago. Our town has a serious problem with some of its youth and they are laughing in the face of our police and getting away with it. In the period of more than a week when the police didn't attempt to recover the stolen car, the youth gang was driving it all over town, including driving one of the gang to a court appearance!

It does not stop there. Kaimkillenbun, a beautiful little town, was described in the local paper as a town held to ransom by rogue kid vandals. For the 100 citizens of Kaimkillenbun, their peaceful existence was interrupted by a group of young vandals aged seven to 16 years who were working hard to destroy the town piece by piece. It is of serious concern when we consider that 10 per cent of juveniles were responsible for 44 per cent of all proven offences, as reported in the 2017-18 Childrens Court annual report. Residents of my electorate and other places in rural and regional Queensland—and I have no doubt Townsville as well—normally have peaceful communities, but they often find themselves at absolute wits' end with repeat youth offenders.

Under Labor, more repeat offenders will be let out on the streets into rural and regional communities and back to places like Townsville only to reoffend. That is one compelling reason the LNP is moving these amendments to restore breach of bail as an offence. This is a very important reform and I do urge the government to support the LNP amendments, because they will result in better outcomes from this bill.