




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 14 May 2019

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Youth Detention

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.00 pm): Last night's revelations about children being kept in watch houses made me sick to my stomach—kids being locked up for up to 40 days in our watch houses; children trying to hang themselves in police stations; a girl being locked in the same room as two alleged sexual predators. We are talking about children as young as 10 and some with a mental age of around six. We are talking about primary school aged kids traumatised by the system—a system that the Palaszczuk Labor government has inflicted on them. I say to the Premier today: get these kids out of the watch houses.

Today the Premier has failed the test of leadership. The Premier should have come into this House and explained to Queenslanders why the justice system is a national embarrassment. In the Premier's ministerial statement what did the Premier say about the children who have been locked up 24/7 with the lights on for up to 40 days? The Premier was deathly silent. The Premier has failed the test of leadership.

We know that the system is failing these children. These children should not be in watch houses. It is a system that is brutalising children and pushing our police to breaking point. Everyone responsible for this shocking state of affairs should hang their heads in shame, and those people are not hard to find. This is not a whodunnit. We know exactly who to blame, and that is the Palaszczuk Labor government—the Premier, her police minister and her youth minister. They have all created this crisis. This is all down to them, and they cannot say they were not warned.

The LNP told the Palaszczuk government not to remove 17-year-olds from adult prisons without a plan, but the Palaszczuk Labor government did not listen—they never do. They did not listen to the Public Guardian when she wrote to the director-general of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. They did not listen when she wrote to the director-general of the Premier's own department. The question that needs answering is: what action did the Premier take after being notified of these warnings? The Public Guardian wrote that she could not sleep at night because of what is happening in our watch houses. It seems that those involved, the Palaszczuk Labor government and the ministers, were simply not worried. Labor lit the fuse for this crisis. They have stood back and they have ignored the warnings.

Just a week ago the police minister said that 10-year-olds were not being held in watch houses. If the police minister does not know what is going on in our watch houses then how on earth will this mess ever be fixed? The youth minister is simply no better. The youth minister seemed shell-shocked on last night's show. For anyone who watched it, it was a national embarrassment. The Palaszczuk Labor government is a national embarrassment and no more so than the Minister for Youth. 'I wasn't told about this,' she said. Then she again said, 'No, I wasn't told about that.' This is a youth minister who has no plan to fix the crisis and no guarantees about when it will be fixed. It is clear that they do

not even have a clue about what has happened. I will explain it to them. It is not that complicated. Our police stations were not built to hold children for four days, let alone 40 days. Our police officers are not trained to be childminders or counsellors for up to 40 days.

The LNP warned the Premier not to remove 17-year-olds from adult prisons without a plan. The hardworking police in this great state have been warning the government about this crisis in the making. Whose crisis is it? It is a crisis of the Palaszczuk Labor government. The detention of 17-year-old offenders in our prisons was far more humane than Labor's heartless regime. They were held separately from adult prisoners. They were guarded. They were supervised. Very importantly, they were educated by properly trained staff. They were certainly safer than where they are being held right now. This incompetent, arrogant and negligent government has made a dreadful decision. It is time that the Premier stood up, showed some leadership and took responsibility for this failed decision.

We know that this government has only been interested in passing a Human Rights Bill. I think it was the youth minister last night on the *Four Corners* program who said, 'What bill? We don't have that yet. The starting date is not until the first of next year.'

Mr Minnikin: Charter boat? What charter boat?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Charter boat? Isn't the youth minister lucky that the bill is not retrospective? Instead of worrying about the children who are being held in light filled rooms for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they are more worried about passing a bill that the government's own policies would not even pass. It is a national shame.

Our youth crime crisis is not just confined to police watch houses; it is on our streets, too. I tabled my second petition today and there is another petition that will be tabled tomorrow in relation to juvenile crime and the growing tide of youth crime in my local community in and around the South Burnett. The residents there want a curfew of 10 pm for their township. They want more police in the community at night and on the weekends, and our local police want more support. From the Brisbane watch houses to the streets of Murgon, the Palaszczuk Labor government is presiding over a crime and detention crisis. I urge the Palaszczuk Labor government not to ignore this warning like it has ignored so many other warnings.

On the issue of human rights there is nothing more precious than the right to freedom of speech, to be able to talk to our politicians. In Queensland we now know that you have to be careful which politician you speak to. Do not dare say a word to any Labor leaders. If you do, you will be locked out of your desk and your desk will be cleared out before you know anything about it.

Today in this chamber we heard Minister Bailey actually say that the Gladstone Port suspended a contract with the company. Who ordered that suspension? Was it Minister Bailey or was it the other shareholding minister, the Deputy Premier? Maybe it was the Treasurer of this state, the member for South Brisbane, who picked up the phone and said, 'Yes, Bill. Yes, Bill. You've spoken out. I know we organised that man to talk to you and he said something about tax.' The Labor Party loves to tax Queenslanders, yet this hardworking Queenslanders stood up for the other workers in Queensland and what happened to him?

Mr Mander: Gone!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Gone. He got sacked. The hardworking company that had a contract with Gladstone Port got suspended. Which shareholding minister is responsible? Is it the one who took the fall this morning, Minister Bailey, or is it the Treasurer of Queensland? Those are the answers that the people of Queensland would like to know.

Opposition member interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Or maybe it was the Premier, but we know she does not like to make decisions.

(Time expired)