




Speech By  
**Jessica Pugh**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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### **YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (6.16 pm): I am happy to rise in support of the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. In doing so I place on record my thanks and admiration for the Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Di Farmer. As I was writing my speech I was reflecting on the work that she has put into this portfolio. No-one can deny that youth justice is a challenging portfolio. It rarely has good news stories. Every time I have attended an event with Minister Farmer I have been struck by her positive outlook. I think it is exactly what we need in this portfolio; we owe it to our young people who come into contact with the youth justice system and to our community as a whole.

This legislation is about our government's commitment in the *Working together changing the story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019-2023* to commence the review of the Youth Justice Act. The Mount Ommaney electorate is a stone's throw from a number of corrective services facilities, including the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre in Wacol. Many of my constituents work in the corrective services sector. Indeed, many of them are parents at my children's school so I know that this bill is important to my community for a number of reasons.

This bill supports the Palaszczuk government's commitment to keep our young people out of watch houses on remand, other than for normal arrest and processing. I am sure that each and every one of us in this House agrees with that principle. The bill contains priority legislative amendments that complement the significant government investment in initiatives to reduce the pressures within the youth justice system. Crucially, the bill makes amendments in relation to three areas. Firstly, it reduces the period in which proceedings in the youth justice system are finalised; it also looks to ensure age-appropriate conditions are attached to grants of bail for our young people; and, finally, it is removing legislative barriers to enable more young people to be appropriately granted bail.

To encourage more young people to be appropriately granted bail, the bill clarifies that certain provisions of the Bail Act do not apply to children. It clarifies that the principle of detention as a last resort applies to bail decision-making. It also clarifies the bail decision-making framework in the act and incorporates an explicit presumption in favour of release that can only be rebutted where there is an unacceptable risk if the young person is released. It outlines the matters to be considered by a police officer or court when deciding if an unacceptable risk exists and whether to release a young person with or without bail. It provides that even when a risk is identified the child may be released if it is not inconsistent with ensuring community safety and it is otherwise appropriate having regard to any additional considerations. These amendments have been designed to achieve good outcomes by maintaining the discretion of the courts and the police in a more contemporary framework.

I want to finish by sharing something that I heard the Premier say when we were attending her former primary school, Jamboree Heights State School, a few months ago to launch the Premier's Reading Challenge. This is very relevant because the Premier's Reading Challenge gives every child the opportunity to set themselves up and view themselves positively as a learner and a reader. It gives every kid the opportunity to see themselves in a really positive light, and we know just how important that is for all young people.

At the media conference that day, the Premier was asked directly about young people in detention and her response has stayed with me. She said that, in addition to the reforms that we are making today through this legislation to address the issue, we need to make sure that young people have access to the best possible start in life and then they can get a job. We have to change the ending. It was clear to me then, as it is today, that we have a premier and a minister in Di Farmer who are absolutely committed to delivering real reform to break the cycle. I commend the bill to the House.