




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (6.37 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. This bill before the House reflects the government's commitment to delivery effective youth justice reforms and break the cycle of reoffending. We all have a role to play in that very worthy goal. We know that by working together closely we are best placed to achieve real and tangible outcomes.

Police play an important role in the community when it comes to young offenders. They are the first responders when a young person commits an offence and must maintain a level of awareness and responsiveness to those affected by youth offending. Further, police play a key role in maintaining community safety and ensuring a young person is held accountable for their behaviour.

Fortunately, the majority of young people who come to police attention through offending or antisocial behaviour are diverted away from court and the criminal justice system through a range of options and do not reoffend. Some of the children coming to police attention have complex needs. It is important to remember that some of these young people have been arrested on very serious charges. Those who face serious charges need to be kept off the streets for their own safety and the safety of the community. These children require support to address the underlying factors in their lives which contribute to their offending behaviour.

We need to have a balanced youth justice system that addresses the causes of offending and draws on the positive benefits of early intervention and rehabilitation to build stronger and safer communities. We are investing in these strategies because, quite frankly, they work and they ensure that young people have the opportunity to turn their lives around.

Currently the Queensland Police Service administers a number of strategies to support and protect young offenders in Queensland. This bill is about building on those levels of support. It will strengthen the current requirement for police to notify a young person's parent or guardian by expanding the definition of a parent. We are also strengthening support by ensuring the provision of early legal advice to young offenders coming to the attention of police. This change will support faster processing and resolution for the young person. Prompt legal advice will also inform police in making appropriate decisions when it comes to diversion, charges and detention in police custody.

To support a child's attendance at court and overcome transport challenges where a court is located far from the child's home, a notice to appear for a child will now require the child to appear at the court that the police officer is satisfied is most convenient for the child to access. Further, the bill will remove legislative barriers enabling more young people to be appropriately granted bail and ensure the appropriate conditions are attached to the grants of bail. This includes the implementation of the intensive community supervision program. We have backed this plan with a significant investment—\$9.4 million this financial year.

In addition to ongoing multiagency case management, young people on bail will be supported by dedicated teams of police officers and police liaison officers to ensure they abide by their bail conditions. These teams will be established in six locations across the state and operate in a hub style model. They will work with the young person, their family and support network and, through support services, encourage and help the young person meet their bail obligations.

The use of police liaison officers provides additional support and encouragement to help the young person comply with their bail conditions. The introduction of these laws, coupled with the government's significant investment in youth justice initiatives, will reduce the demand pressure within the youth justice system and support the efforts of Queensland's hardworking police.

On that point, we have heard a number of contributions from those opposite about the role of police in caring for young people in police custody, particularly in watch houses. I am disappointed that those opposite, yet again, have not shown the utmost respect and support for our police officers. When you are elected to this House you have a certain responsibility to be careful about the contributions you make in this House. Recklessness when it comes to contributions in this House is not only disorderly but offensive to those people who are the subject of those contributions.

To come into this House and restate allegations made about police as if they are fact—as if they are fact—without checking those allegations first is outrageous and an insult to our police.

Ms Farmer: And knowing they are not true.

Mr RYAN: I take the interjection from the Minister for Child Safety. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition has at least on two occasions—

Ms Farmer: Yes.

Mr RYAN:—been written to about those allegations which were formally and fully investigated and discounted. They exonerated the police. For members opposite to come in and insult the professionalism of our police, to disrespect our police and to restate those allegations which the Leader of the Opposition has been told are unsubstantiated—are not grounded in fact—is an insult to this House. They know the facts, so for them to come in knowing the facts and to state something opposite disrespects this House and is a matter that is generally for the consideration of the Ethics Committee.

I think the more heinous approach that those opposite have taken is not only to disrespect this House but also to disrespect our police—to call into question the professionalism of our police, the compassion of our police and the general work that our police do not only to care for people in their custody but to promote community safety. Shame on every member on that side who has come in here and restated allegations as if they are fact when they are on notice. The Leader of the Opposition has been written to on at least two occasions, I am informed, saying that those allegations are false. They have been investigated and the police have been exonerated in respect of those matters.

I expect those members who have already stated those allegations as if they are fact to stand up and apologise to the House but, more importantly, to stand up and apologise to our police. I also expect any further member of the opposition, when they are making their contribution to check with the Leader of the Opposition because they are on notice. The elements of misleading the House are not only that you make a misleading statement but that you know it is misleading yet you still make that contribution anyway. All of them who have done that are on notice. They know of this. If they get up and restate those allegations as if they are fact, they are misleading this House.

As I said, the more heinous approach that they have taken is to disrespect our police. It is an outrageous approach to try to score a couple of political points and use our police as a political football. I expect all of those members opposite to apologise. The Leader of the Opposition has insulted our police before. She is on the record. Our police are very upset with her. This is just another tick in the column for her upsetting our police. She does not stand by them. She does not support them. She can then also get up and apologise on behalf of all of her team. For that matter, she might need to apologise to her entire backbench and to the shadow Attorney-General for not telling them, if they have not been told, about the correspondence that has been received by her about those allegations.

This government takes youth justice very seriously. We support our police. We know our police have a very important and challenging role when it comes to dealing with young offenders in our community. Our police are professional in their dealings. Our police are compassionate in their dealings. Our police want nothing more than to be part of the solution in helping a young person live a positive life. They do not want young people reoffending. They do not want young people being caught up in the criminal justice system. They care about those young people. They want those young people to be positive contributors to our community. Yet again, we see those opposite disrespect our police, not support our police and restate matters in this House, which draws into question their own integrity on these issues.