




Speech By
Peter Russo

MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2019

YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (4.20 pm): I know what is a shame. It is a shame that the member for Toowoomba South could not tell us the LNP's solution to juvenile justice in this state. If anyone could understand what it is, I invite them to share it with me. I have just read the amendments to the bill. It is obvious that the LNP still does not get it. Children who have contact with the juvenile justice system are children and need to be treated differently from adult offenders. I question why the definition of 'child' is changed to 'arrested child'.

I have had the opportunity to speak to stakeholders who work in the juvenile justice system. I was not surprised to hear that, under the LNP, more 17-year-olds were held in custody in watch houses than were ever held during the recent events. I would also like to take this opportunity to give the LNP a history lesson on its role in dismantling the juvenile justice system. When the LNP was in power, because of its policy of naming and shaming, it closed the purpose-built Childrens Court in North Quay and moved it to the George Street facility, the adult court. Why did the LNP do this? Because the purpose-built court did not have a gallery and the Childrens Court is a closed court. I would like to highlight the advantage of the purpose-built court. It meant that children were dealt with the way they should be. I would also like to highlight that the Childrens Court had a canteen, which came in handy for disorganised lawyers who were always running late between courts. It allowed them to get a coffee and a bacon and egg roll. For some of the juveniles who appeared in the system, we have to remember that the meal that they got on that day when they came to court would have been the only meal that they received.

I support the bill before the House and recommend that it be passed. As was stated in the explanatory notes, on 11 December 2018, the Queensland government released the *Working together changing the story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019-2023*. The youth justice strategy adopts four pillars as its policy position for youth justice reform: intervene early, keep children out of court, keep children out of custody and reduce reoffending. The fourth pillar of the youth justice strategy, reduce reoffending, commits to review the Youth Justice Act 1992. The bill supports the implementation of the youth justice strategy by delivering a commitment to commence the review of the Youth Justice Act.

In the time available to me I will not deal with the pertinent parts of the bill other than to say that the bill will help to deal with children in a speedy manner and relieve the pressure in watch houses that we have seen recently. I commend the bill to the House.