




Speech By
Hon. Di Farmer

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2020

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Youth Justice

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.11 am): Community safety is the Palaszczuk government's No. 1 priority and why we are continuing to make record investments in youth justice. As part of our over \$500 million investment in youth justice reform, we are increasing the capacity of our youth detention centres to continue keeping our community safe and to hold young offenders to account.

I am pleased to report to the House that construction of a new 16-bed facility with education support services at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre at Wacol has been completed by QBuild. This \$27 million investment takes the centre's capacity from 146 beds to 162 beds. The 16 beds were delivered on budget and on time despite COVID-19 restrictions. QBuild, site supervisors, subcontractors and union representatives all worked together to ensure compliance with social distancing rules. This meant adjustments to the way the site worked, but the important point is that we were able to keep trades in work. The project, which generated 89 jobs involving over 500 people on site with 45 apprentices—and in challenging circumstances—is a credit to everyone involved.

Detention centres are not just about beds. They must include the right facilities—laundry, recreation, health services and space for visiting service providers, and training and education facilities. As part of this newest block, for instance, four extra classrooms and teaching areas were added to ensure young people's education needs are met. This will further enhance the Brisbane centre's rehabilitation services and their focus on reducing reoffending. These services include helping young people become job ready in a range of areas and preparing them for when they leave the centre. Together, these measures are protecting our community while working to break the cycle of youth crime.

Later this year, another milestone in our record youth justice investment is to become a reality. I refer here to our \$150 million investment in a new 32-bed youth detention centre being built adjacent to the existing Brisbane Youth Detention Centre. This facility is scheduled to be operational by the end of the year. The 48 beds that will come on line are in addition to the 16 new beds finalised at BYDC in July 2018 and 12 new beds at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre in April 2019. This brings our total bed capacity in detention centres from 230 at the beginning of this term to 306, an increase of 33 per cent in this term. This is in stark contrast to the LNP's efforts while they were in government when, despite clear projections of increasing demand for beds, they made no investment at all in youth detention centre facilities—zero new beds in their entire three years, and going into the 2015 election a plan to cut \$150 million from the budget. By increasing this capacity as we have, the Palaszczuk Labor government is sending a very clear message that we expect young people to be held accountable for their actions and that public safety remains paramount.