




Speech By
Brent Mickelberg

MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 22 April 2021

YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (12.14 pm): It is with a sense of déjà vu that I today rise to address the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, a bill that is the Palaszczuk Labor government's latest insipid response to a youth crime crisis that is of their own making. It is a problem which has spiralled out of control across Queensland because the Palaszczuk Labor government have been unwilling to act decisively and swiftly. This bill is just the latest example of that failure. If these matters were not so serious, it would be laughable that we are here today debating another youth justice bill when less than two years ago the government pushed through a youth justice bill with provisions that sought to release more youth offenders onto bail, ignored recommendations for GPS tracking of youth offenders and put Queenslanders at risk. No doubt we will be back again in coming years when Labor's latest weak laws also fail to keep Queenslanders safe.

While the problems with youth crime in places like Townsville and Cairns are well known, Labor's soft-on-crime approach is now resulting in a creeping wave of youth crime extending right across Queensland. Residents on the Sunshine Coast must now contend with regular break and enters, vehicle thefts and worse. Our community has had enough. Data from the Queensland Police Service shows that between 2017 and 2019 the number of offences committed by youth offenders rose considerably across the Sunshine Coast. In my electorate, in Buderim the number was up 646 per cent; in Mountain Creek up 252 per cent; and in Sippy Downs up 404 per cent.

Despite the government's suggestions to the contrary, not only are the number of offences up; so too are the number of repeat youth offenders. Between 2017 and 2019, the number of youth offenders rose significantly across the Sunshine Coast. In my electorate, in Buderim the number of youth offenders was up 300 per cent; in Mountain Creek up 228 per cent; and in Sippy Downs the number of youth offenders was up a staggering 720 per cent. The statistics do not lie. We have a problem with repeat youth offenders and they are holding our community to ransom.

Sadly, the statistics are only part of the story. All too often I hear from Sunshine Coast locals who have been directly impacted by crime or who live in fear. Over recent weeks, the communities of Sippy Downs and Brightwater in my electorate of Buderim have been besieged by young offenders breaking into houses and stealing vehicles. The result has seen single mothers who can no longer drive their kids to school or pick up groceries, tradies who cannot earn an income, and widows who live in fear because the safety of their home has been violated. My community is sick and tired of being held to ransom by young criminals who break into homes, steal cars and terrorise residents. Something needs to change and the government's latest response to this problem does not go far enough.

One year ago today, two retirees who live in a usually nice, safe street in Buderim were sitting down for dinner, minding their own business, when three juveniles violently invaded their home. I met with the couple and they described the three kicking in the door before forcing entry to their house. Then two of the young juveniles pulled knives on the couple before demanding their car keys. Thankfully, while the husband held the assailants at bay with a chair, the wife called police. When the young assailants were advised that police were on their way, they fled. Due to the swift action of the

couple and police, the three boys, who were aged 13, 14 and 15, were promptly arrested and they were each charged with break and enter, stealing and two counts of attempted robbery. I have since been advised that the three have been sentenced and they were indeed recidivist youth offenders who had been charged with similar behaviour in the past and, no doubt, since.

Despite their actions and their history, perhaps the most concerning fact is that those three young offenders were released on bail before breakfast the next day. They were released on bail less than 12 hours after they pulled a knife on retirees. It is not good enough. Such a course of action simply does not align with community expectations. I table an article from the *Sunshine Coast Daily* which details that incident.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Sunshine Coast Daily* online, dated 23 April 2020, titled 'Elderly man fends off armed teens with chair' [553](#).

It is time for there to be consequences for those who disregard the law, regardless of their age. Since Labor came into power in 2015, crime in Queensland has spiralled out of control. It is time for this weak Labor state government to give our local police the laws they need to crack down on those who seek to bring harm to our community, and this bill does not achieve that. While many of the provisions contained in this bill are welcome, they do not go far enough. The use of electronic monitoring devices as a condition of bail for 16- and 17-year-old offenders is a positive step, but it does not go far enough. It would not have applied to any of the young offenders who accosted the law-abiding retirees in my electorate who were just trying to enjoy their dinner.

Mr Stevens: They're a badge of honour.

Mr MICKELBERG: No doubt they are a badge of honour, member for Mermaid Beach. We need to see breach of bail implemented in order to ensure that there is a consequence for those who choose to disregard the law time and time again. Labor need to put community safety ahead of the rights of young criminals. Bail for offenders should be a privilege, not a right. Breach of bail will provide a consequence for disregarding community expectation. Labor's solution of implementing a circumstance of aggravation provision does not achieve that. I will support this bill because it does take some positive steps to address the problem, but, simply put, more needs to be done.