




Speech By
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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Youth Justice

 **Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.15 pm): I cannot let the collective delusion of those opposite during question time go unquestioned this afternoon. I refer to the issue that the Leader of the Opposition has just spoken about, that is, youth crime and the government's legislative response to it. For far too long in this House we have heard those opposite speak about youth crime and the law but there is a clear line—there is a clear thread—that stretches back six years in relation to the issue, and those opposite must accept responsibility for the fact that they should be doing better to get the law right.

In 2015 the former attorney-general's reforms were overturned. That led into 2016 when 17-year-olds were moved into the youth justice system. From there we saw a particular crisis around watch houses. At the time the police union chief, Ian Leavers, said that there was no plan; that there was more planning done for your average McDonalds store than there was for transferring 17-year-olds into the youth justice system. We saw a change in the law that was fundamentally unplanned for and resulted in the watch house crisis that saw children locked up in watch houses across Queensland. At one stage in Brisbane there were more children than adults in the watch house, all because of the thread that runs back to Labor government law reforms in the youth justice space.

The government then created, out of thin air, a brand new youth justice department to try to address some of the problems with youth justice. They came back into this House and sought more law reform. They changed section 48 of the Youth Justice Act to overturn the presumption of bail. From there we started to see more and more offending such as we have seen in the past couple of months throughout Queensland. That offending has traumatised so many, including those in the community of the member for Capalaba but not just there. Across Townsville and in my own home town of Toowoomba people are sick of the changes that result in these consequences.

This government has had no plan for youth justice. They have never thought through the unintended consequences—not when they changed the law in 2015, not when they brought 17-year-olds into the youth justice system, not when they created a youth justice department and not when they walked into this place in 2019 and changed section 48 to overturn the presumption of bail. Then the police minister went to Townsville and criticised the magistrates. It is their law. It is the government's law. It is Labor's law.

At the start of last year, before COVID, I remember going to a series of crime forums, including with the member for Callide and the member for Clayfield on the Gold Coast. Hundreds of people from the community came because they were distressed about the levels of crime that they saw every day. As the Leader of the Opposition has just said, families have had their cars stolen and their homes broken into. A home is sacred. It is where people should feel safest of all. That sacred trust has been destroyed by repeat offenders and we have seen that time and time again. This government must take responsibility.

The government has foreshadowed that it will introduce a bill this week. By my count that will be their fourth attempt in six years to try to address some of the youth justice problems in Queensland. Do I believe that the latest amendment will address all of the problems? No! We know it will not. Will they go back to the pre-2019 presumption of bail legal position? I do not know. We will wait and see. What we do know is that changing the law four times in six years betrays the fact that they have no idea what they are doing about youth justice. The community must know this because while ever this government stays in power we will see flipping and flopping and a betrayal of the community. No matter where they are they must be held accountable for that, and we will hold them to account in this place.