




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 21 April 2021

YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (3.17 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Following the member for Pine Rivers in this House it is very clear that there are members on the other side of this chamber who simply do not appreciate, or are possibly completely out of touch with, what is actually happening within their communities.

The breach of bail offence that we are recommending as an amendment here in this chamber today simply removes the word 'child' from that provision. It seems that whatever the member for Pine Rivers was just talking about is completely different to what we are proposing as an amendment. The amendment and the explanatory notes to the amendment can be distributed throughout the chamber. Maybe the member for Pine Rivers would like to look at that to get a greater understanding of the very sensible—some would say middle-of-the-road—amendment that is being proposed for this piece of legislation.

The Nanango electorate is certainly not immune to the impacts of youth crime. It is an issue that we are always aware of. As a former lawyer in the Childrens Court system I know that there can be particularly bad periods within a community depending upon a group of juveniles at the time. It is usually a small group of juveniles committing a bigger group of offences.

I start my contribution by thanking our incredibly hardworking police officers, the men and women who work within the child safety department and the men and women who work in all of the associated services in our communities, especially those communities in the South Burnett where child crime is out of control. Between 2018 and 2019 in the townships around Murgon there were periods when our community felt completely powerless. Most residents were angry with the justice system and rightfully so. The statistics were up there with the unfortunate statistics of the regions around Townsville. I have been a very vocal critic of the juvenile crime issues going on in the north. I feel very sorry for the people of North Queensland who have to put up with that. They have to put up with the Palaszczuk government's constant changes around juvenile crime—changes that depend on the day of the week, what has gone on and the political problem that the Palaszczuk government has to fix.

Let us look at a bit of history. In 2016 Labor had a five-point plan that was going to fix the problem of juvenile crime. I think that came from North Queensland, around your area of Townsville, Mr Deputy Speaker. In 2019 we had a four-point plan. The Labor government ditched the five-point plan and said, 'We're going to have a four-point plan.' Then in March 2020 they decided to have a five-point youth justice action plan, but I do not think they were able to explain the differences between the original five-point plan, the subsequent four-point plan and the new five-point plan.

While this legislation goes some way towards the issues surrounding juvenile crime, it definitely does not go far enough, and that is why the opposition will be moving an amendment. It is why breach of bail must be reinstated for juveniles who continue to commit crimes. Again I point to the fact that in all of our communities it is a small number of youths committing a large number of crimes and they are repeat offenders. Time after time in courtrooms lawyers see the same kids, but their hands are tied, the

magistrates' hands are tied and the police officers' hands are tied. That is frustrating because they are there to protect the community and that is what we are trying to do through this amendment. We are standing with the police officers who are calling for this amendment to be put in legislation. We are standing with our local communities that are asking for this amendment to be put in legislation. That includes communities represented by those opposite and not just the ones represented by the opposition. Communities across this state are asking for this amendment to be passed.

Figures from between 2018 and 2020 indicate the number of young people who are offending while on bail—and I want to read these into the record: 3,744 distinct young people reoffended, 179 children committed more than 30 new offences each and 944 children each committed between 10 and 30 new offences while on bail pending court appearances. Our communities want children to face consequences for committing crimes and they want them to face consequences when those crimes are committed while they are on bail. Everyone has a right to feel safe in their homes and when they are on the streets.

In the time I have left I want to put on the record my heartfelt condolences to Brett and Belinda Beasley following the loss of their son Jack, and give a shout-out to Mitch, Jack's brother. I also give a massive shout-out to the member for Bonney who has advocated on behalf of his community in recognition of the effects that knife crime have had on that community. It is an issue that is felt across our great state so I welcome the trial contained in the legislation. The alleged offences that happened to Jack Beasley can never be forgotten. My husband and I wear the Jack Beasley Foundation cap with pride when we are out walking at times. I have met many families that have been affected by knife crime. The advocacy of that group of people, particularly through the Jack Beasley Foundation, and the pure strength that they have shown in advocating for change is a real inspiration to me and to many members in this House, so I am pleased to see that the trial will be supported. If the trial is successful I would like to see it expanded to other hotspots affected by knife crime.

I give credit where credit is due in relation to tightening the laws around hooning. Hooning is a major nightmare for many local communities, not just in built-up regions and city areas but also in regional areas. There is no greater advocate for strengthening the hooning laws in this state than the member for Mudgeeraba. The member for Mudgeeraba has taken on the hoons. That has been to her personal detriment as she has been attacked on Facebook and in social media, although I think she can take it up. Allegedly, her office was attacked as well. It was hooned right into—allegedly—but allegedly that also fell down.

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: That is not alleged—that actually happened—but if it is before the courts it is alleged. Hooning must stop. We must make sure that our community is kept safe. I am a mum with one open licence holder and two P-platers, which is a dangerous spot to be in because it is scary to think that your kids are on the road with hoons. We need to do anything we can to stop juvenile criminals from flogging cars and hooning off in them. We should do anything we can to toughen the laws in this great state and give our hardworking police officers the levers that they need. I plead with those opposite to consider our amendment in their deliberations because certainly it will go a long way to strengthening the laws and keeping our communities safe.