




Speech By
Kim Richards

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Record of Proceedings, 21 April 2021

YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms RICHARDS** (Redlands—ALP) (4.47 pm): I rise to make a contribution in support of the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Our job as members of parliament is to represent our local communities, to listen and to act, and that is exactly what this bill is about. It acts on the feedback I have received from many residents in my electorate. It also responds to the feedback that I heard in the committee's public hearings in Mount Isa, Townsville and Cairns. What is more, the measures in this bill are backed by expert advice and evidence. During the sessions in Mount Isa, Townsville and Cairns it was really interesting from the perspective of a South-East Queensland MP to see the different challenges that exist in regional Queensland and in Northern Queensland.

The bill makes some important changes to bail by reversing the onus so that young offenders charged with serious indictable offences while on bail will need to demonstrate to the court why they are not at risk of reoffending and are not a danger to the community before they can be granted bail. Courts will also be given the power to seek assurances from parents and guardians that they will assist them to comply with their bail obligations when considering the granting of bail. Further, the courts will be able to consider the option of electronic monitoring devices for 16- and 17-year-olds as a condition of bail. The bill will enshrine in legislation that when a young offender commits an offence while on bail the court will consider that an aggravating factor and sentence them accordingly.

The Police Powers and Responsibilities Act will be amended to give police more tools to deal with hooning. We have heard many members talk about the issues of hooning in their local areas. I know this will be an important change within my community. The bill also establishes a trial of metal detector wandering on the Gold Coast. That is an important initiative, in particular in that entertainment precinct.

Our five-point crime action plan is working. We are seeing some encouraging results. The number of youth offenders is the lowest in a decade. While I am on my feet I would like to give a shout-out to my local Redlands police, Lindsay Kilpatrick, Janelle Harm, Steve Graham, Mark Thomas, Chris Hebblesworth, Brendan Winslow and Dave Purcell. The Redlands is an interesting electorate with islands and the mainland and the police do a fantastic job. I know police and youth justice workers in our local community are doing some very important work with at-risk young people to help turn their lives around. However, we know that there is always more to do.

If you or a member of your family end up as a victim of youth crime you feel it personally. That was never more evident than after the incident on Australia Day in our area. You correctly expect the government will take additional action and dedicate additional resources. As the member for Thuringowa said in his contribution, it is really important that the government has listened and is acting. This bill seeks to deal with the small cohort of recidivist youth offenders—around 10 per cent—who are causing significant harm to our communities by committing around 48 per cent of the youth crime.

I would now like to talk about some of the specific elements of the bill in relation to enabling the court to seek assurances from parents and guardians that they will assist young offenders comply with their bail obligations when considering the granting of bail. Parents and guardians should be taking more responsibility for helping young people comply with their bail conditions, including the new condition of electronic monitoring.

The new bail provision in this bill enables the courts and police to consider the willingness of parents and guardians to support a young person in complying with bail conditions. I note that existing provisions already specify the home environment as a matter the bail decision-maker can take into account. We know that family units continue to become ever more complex. These new provisions expressly ensure decision-makers turn their minds to the role that parents are or are not playing when considering bail. Where there is an unacceptable risk that might be mitigated by parental support but none is forthcoming, bail can be refused.

I note the opposition is again raising the issue of breach of bail. Breach of bail did not exist under the former LNP government. None of the most common breaches of bail were ever an offence under the LNP's laws, only committing an offence while on bail. As the member for Cooper mentioned in her contribution, it was ineffective at the time. The fact is that the offence of committing an offence while on bail was an unworkable law. It did not work as a deterrent and was not regularly used by the judiciary. As a consequence offenders actually received a lesser penalty. The LNP's laws did not reduce recidivism. In fact, 94 per cent of young offenders convicted reoffended within two years. We are acting based on expert advice and on the evidence. Our government is only interested in doing what works and that is why we have asked the former police commissioner Bob Atkinson to conduct a review of what we are doing after six months. That will be a really important review.

I would also like to make mention of the Youth Crime Taskforce and the appointment of Assistant Commissioner Cheryl Scanlon to that task force. Six weeks ago in the Redlands we were fortunate to hold a youth crime forum. In attendance were Assistant Commissioner Cheryl Scanlon and Michael Drane, the youth justice reform leader from the department. It was an excellent forum and I would encourage every member in this chamber to take up the opportunity to have them come to your communities so constituents can share their stories and concerns with Assistant Commissioner Scanlon and Michael Drane.

Our forum went for close to three hours. The local police talked about local crime statistics and put some real clarity around that. We talk about statistics, but when you break it down locally in communities it is really important information to share. We also talked about some of the programs that people in our community might not necessarily be aware of. There is a Youth Justice Road Map document and it was fantastic to share that information about the journey of the youth justice system and all of the programs that our government is supporting. It is good information to be sharing with the community. The forum was followed up with a very lengthy Q&A panel session where everybody got to ask their questions. I commend Assistant Commissioner Scanlon and Michael Drane for answering every single question. I thank Minister Ryan and Minister Linard for helping facilitate the forum. These are important conversations to be having in our communities. I commend the bill to the House.