




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (2.40 pm): It is a great pleasure for me to speak to a youth justice bill that is making some attempt to address youth crime, which is growing in my Gold Coast area. We would not have this legislation we are debating here today unless those opposite in government, who make the rules, were not being reactive to the community concern right across Queensland about the growth in youth crime. Any attempt to address the youth crime in our communities—and I have it in my community—is well worth supporting.

However, in the famous words of Jack Gibson, legendary league coach, it is déjà vu all over again. This legislation reminds me of what the government did with the outlaw biker gang legislation in the period before we came to government. I think I spoke around 16 times about the growth of outlaw biker gangs on the Gold Coast, and the government would just come in with another iteration of their answer to fixing that problem. It failed over and over until we had the outrageous outbreak of biker gangs in Broadbeach. The subsequent Newman government then put in place legislation that had the bikies scampering out of Queensland posthaste as fast as their Harley-Davidsons could take them. That was good legislation. As the member for Everton has mentioned, this legislation will be brought back to this place again to try to address this problem.

Senior police come to see me regularly, and the police are doing a wonderful job. We do not have a problem with them; it is the fact that these kids are recidivists in the court system. The police know that in our Gold Coast region there are 50 to 60 kids, who might be called hardcore kids, who basically pay no regard whatsoever to the laws or the courts because they know courts are not going to incarcerate them. They know the courts are not going to treat them harshly because of the legislation that was brought in by this same Labor government in 2016 which watered down the youth justice laws. These 50 or 60 kids are wreaking havoc right across the Gold Coast. I refer to my particular area on the Gold Coast because we never had this problem before but now we do.

I will refer to a particular case and I have to be very sensitive about it. A 25-year-old woman rang my office over the Christmas break. I happened to be in the office checking emails. I took the call directly as my staff were all on holidays. She said, 'I don't know what to do. I'm suicidal.' She said, 'These young thugs broke into my house last night and stole the keys to my car from the table next to my bed while I was sleeping.' She said, 'I am shattered.' I ended up ringing Lifeline. The young woman was absolutely terrified. It went on and we got the police back again. They said, 'There's nothing we can do with these young criminals because of the court situation.' These particular ones were very young. She had previously been the victim of sexual assault. That is why these young thugs breaking into her house because they wanted a car created an absolute mental nightmare for her. These are the things that we have to address.

However, I do not believe these new legislative provisions—and I would be happy to be proven wrong—will address those issues. In six to nine months time, when this legislation has been in effect for a reasonable amount of time, we will be back here with this government saying, 'We're addressing youth justice,' as they did with the outlaw biker gangs, which did not work for all of that period. We will

be going through this process again. I do understand the issues for those on that side of the House around protecting youth and the social aspects of those young offenders. Yes, I sympathise with the social aspects of those young offenders who grow up in difficult circumstances. I do not need to go into that because we all know what those circumstances are.

The fact of the matter is there are 50 or 60 known criminals—yes, they are youths—creating havoc in our Gold Coast region and that is not acceptable to our community. In fact, the other day in Miami three of these young hoodlums grabbed hold of a Japanese tourist in broad daylight and gave him a thrashing outside the Miami shopping centre. The police attended and it is now a matter before the courts so I cannot go down that track. This is the type of thing that we need to address as a community. I do not believe that this legislation will go far enough in removing that from our community. Our police are doing a wonderful job but have their hands tied behind their backs regarding the 50 or 60 repeat offenders. I am talking particularly about my Gold Coast area. I do understand that the problems in Townsville and those other areas are a little bit more entrenched and a little bit more difficult to solve.

I believe we are not going to use the word ‘trackers’ in relation to these kids. I believe we are going to call them ‘monitoring devices’ now. I am not too sure why they cannot be called trackers, but I am sure that will be explained by the minister when speaking to the amendments. The fact is that these kids love to be seen. You can see them on the videos saying, ‘Look at me racing down the M1 in my Audi, creating havoc driving the wrong way. I don’t care, but I do want to demonstrate to everybody that I can break the law and get away with it. I’ll be seeing you next Saturday because I will be out again next Saturday night doing the same thing.’ That is the problem we are not addressing.

The Queensland Police statistics do not lie, and I am sure the minister would agree that they do not put out figures that are fudged. I will provide the Gold Coast figures for assault. Like those young kids who assaulted that Japanese tourist, they do not all fall under youth justice but some will be in the statistics. In 2014 on the Gold Coast there were 1,582 assaults registered with the police force. Guess what? In 2020 there were 3,767, more than double the number of assaults on the Gold Coast. If that is fixing crime on the Gold Coast I will walk backwards to Bourke.

What we have here is an issue with crime across the board, with this government and with their answers in terms of the court system because the police are powerless. It is not the fault of the police; it is over to the courts. Even the Premier has alluded to that in some of her statements regarding magistrates et cetera. Clearly, we have to put in place legislation that will stop these young offenders from thinking they can get away with it. As the member for Everton said, there is no punishment. They will keep doing what they are doing and thumbing their nose at general society.

It is not acceptable, and this government needs to address it properly. This legislation will go some way in doing so. In fact, for quite some time the member for Bonney has highlighted the wandering issue. I am glad to see that wandering has been included in this legislation. It is a very positive step. Knives are the new guns around the town. Anything we can do to get rid of knives will be greatly appreciated. My police tell me that the hooning provisions of this legislation will be a fantastic addition to their police powers.

We will support this youth justice bill but, again, I guarantee that Ray will be making another speech about youth justice in six to nine months. It is absolutely typical of this state Labor government that it is not prepared to put in the hard yards to address crime, which affects 99 per cent of the Queensland community, that is committed by a very small fraction of the people in our communities. That applies to Townsville, Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Until the government is serious about introducing proper legislation, crime statistics will keep on rising. I table those statistics.

Tabled paper: Document, dated 21 April 2021, titled ‘QPS Crime Statistics’ [531](#).