




Speech By
Hon. Di Farmer

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Youth Justice

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business, Minister for Training and Skills Development and Minister for Youth Justice) (10.10 am): It was a great honour to be asked by the Premier to take on the portfolio of youth justice again. We know that youth crime is an issue of great concern to many Queenslanders, in particular those who have been victims of crime. My key priorities will be to target serious repeat offenders, support community safety and tackle the complex causes of youth offending. Community safety and community confidence must bookend everything we do in youth justice.

Queenslanders need to know they are safe from serious offenders, which is why earlier this year we passed new legislation, the Strengthening Community Safety Act, which enacted some of the toughest laws in the country and it was excellent to see that this was supported by both major parties. Although it is early days to see the longer term results of that new legislation, it has been pleasing to see some early figures: 12 serious repeat offender declarations, 299 charges of breach-of-bail conditions, six conditional release orders longer than three months and 17 charges for young people using social media while offending as an aggravated offence.

We also need to have measures in place that will stop young people from offending in the first place or, if they have offended, to stop them from doing so again, and so it was fantastic as my first announcement in the role to travel to Toowoomba on the weekend to announce the first of the new round of five youth co-responder programs. The Toowoomba program started last Thursday and in the coming weeks we will see new programs running out in Ipswich, Mount Isa, Hervey Bay and South Brisbane. This new raft of programs is on top of eight co-responder programs already in place across the state in Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Moreton, Brisbane North, Logan and the Gold Coast. Collectively across all of those sites, our teams have interacted with almost 60,000 young people with a 95 per cent average compliance in their interactions with the co-responder teams, including compliance with bail conditions and orders. This is a program already making a difference, with police and youth justice workers partnering in a 24/7 approach to stopping young people from offending.

We know that many young people in the system have been exposed to one or more issues such as DV, homelessness, poverty, substance abuse, mental health issues, disengagement from education and other factors. Together police and youth justice staff are engaging with at-risk young people like these at local parks, shopping centres, on the street, in their homes and referring them to the services that can help them. Sometimes it is as simple as taking them somewhere so they have a bed to sleep in and food in their bellies; sometimes it is intensive follow-up with drug and alcohol rehab services, mental health services and other programs. Brooke Sanders, the team leader for the Toowoomba program, told me that since the program started just last Thursday their team has already provided support to more than 20 young people. Well done to that mighty team and all co-responder team members across the state.

This government understands the impacts of youth crime. It is why we are determined to continue tackling the complex causes of crime. Change takes time, but we are seeing strong results like these from this and other prevention programs and we commit to building on the existing strong foundations to keep Queenslanders safe.