




Speech By
Hon. Di Farmer

MEMBER FOR BULIMBA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Youth Crime

 **Hon. DE FARMER** (Bulimba—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business, Minister for Training and Skills Development and Minister for Youth Justice) (9.56 am): Since being appointed 14 weeks ago as youth justice minister, my director-general and I have travelled across the state speaking to victims, stakeholders, staff and members of the public to hear of their experiences with youth justice. I want to thank them for their excellent conversations. In all of these meetings I have reiterated my priorities as youth justice minister, which are community safety, tackling the complex causes of youth crime, targeting serious repeat offenders, giving a voice to victims and reassuring Queenslanders that what we do is based on evidence.

There is no one single solution to youth crime, but if a young person is at risk of reoffending or a risk to the community our laws say they must be held accountable. We have some of the harshest youth justice laws in the country and I thank the opposition for their support for those laws. We have announced we will build two new detention centres, but they will be therapeutic detention centres because we want to make sure we do not see those young people back in the system. We have invested almost half a billion dollars in early intervention and prevention programs to address the complex causes of youth crime. It is as a result of our programs that youth offending has declined by 35 per cent over the last 10 years, by 30 per cent over the last five years and a decline of three per cent in the last year. However, it remains that 20 per cent of young offenders are committing 54 per cent of the crime and it is this group we are targeting.

Yesterday I spoke of some of the very good results we are getting from some of our early intervention programs which show these programs are effective. To quote some figures on our new laws since their introduction in March: 402 unique young offenders were charged with a total of 1,681 breach of bail offences; 681 charges containing one of the new unauthorised use of motor vehicle circumstance of aggravation, with 96.4 per cent of offenders convicted; and 49 young people charged with publishing details of offending on social media.

It is important to hear these figures, but as I travel around the state it is the stories of how lives have been turned around by our programs that really bring their importance to life and if they are out of the system then our community is safer. Like the young offender who was couch surfing with his friends on the Gold Coast due to a breakdown in the family home. He was at risk of further offending due to associations with other high-risk young people. He has Asperger's and ASD due to a head injury acquired following a family feud. Our youth co-responder team identified that person needed support for mental health, physical health, accommodation, employment and driving lessons. They helped address his immediate needs for food, toiletries, clean clothes, showers and a phone. They referred him for crisis accommodation, applied for a Medicare card, getting a bank debit card and booking driving lessons with an instructor so he would be better placed to get a job. They connected him to mental health services. They reconnected him to his grandmother and helped forge positive relationships. He has not offended since being involved with our team.

Regardless of statistics heading in the right direction and regardless of the human stories we hear about programs working, we know that if you are a victim of crime then those stories may bring you no comfort. If you have had someone break into your home or, worse, if you have lost a loved one then they bring you no comfort. That is why we must listen to the voices of victims. It is why we heard the Premier talk today about the victims commissioner. It is why I have appointed a victim's representative to my Youth Justice Taskforce. It is why I am looking forward to meeting representatives from the Voice for Victims group today. We must all work together to get the best outcomes for our communities.