




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) (10.07 am): In addressing the serious issue of youth crime, the Palaszczuk government is committed to keeping the community safe, tackling the complex causes of crime, targeting serious repeat offenders and supporting victims. In addition to our strong laws, we are building two new youth detention centres. They are therapeutic centres, because once young people have been in the system we do not want to see them back again.

Focusing on addressing the complex causes of crime is an absolute priority. We have committed almost half a billion dollars to early intervention and prevention programs in youth justice since 2015. As a result, we have seen a 30 per cent decline in youth offending over the last five years. What remains is a small cohort of 452 young offenders at this time—20 per cent of young offenders committing over 50 per cent of the crime. To a person, I can tell you that these young people have been exposed to one or more of the following: domestic violence, one or both parents in custody, substance abuse, homelessness, neglect, poverty, disengagement from education, and lack of a single adult to walk alongside them in life.

Turning their lives around is no simple task. That is why I am so pleased with the results we are getting from some of our programs which are aimed directly at this cohort. Intensive case management is one such program. It targets serious repeat offenders aged 10 to 17 years to help break the cycle of crime. Our staff are working five to six days a week with each person, sometimes for nine to 12 months before we get results, but it is working. Early evidence shows a 51 per cent reduction in offending frequency and a 72 per cent reduction in the proportion of crimes against the person.

There is the 17-year-old who began offending at 15. He has been subject to nine supervised orders for motor vehicle, property and violent robbery offending, spending 233 nights in detention. When he started intensive case management, he and his family were homeless and living in a motel. He and his siblings had not been to school for more than six months and there was drug use. In the year the family has been working with our case workers, they are now in a house, his younger brother is back at school and his younger sister is engaged with programs. The young person has started another of our successful programs, Transition 2 Success, and mum has started a TAFE course.

There was a 13-year-old teenager who was committing serious offences, including motor vehicle, stealing and robbery offences. His mum struggled to impose rules and boundaries and had difficulty managing his behaviour. First remanded at the age of 13, his offences continued escalating in frequency and severity, he would not cooperate with his youth justice workers and he was getting into drugs and alcohol. His caseworker worked with him and his family, including his siblings, and put in place a framework to help strengthen family relationships. They helped him make positive choices about the activities he would enjoy getting involved in, which for him were learning how to fish and fixing up an old scooter, and the tide started to turn. He cut ties with his antisocial peers, removing himself from their

negative influence. His relationship with his family has improved, especially with his mum. He has stayed away from offending to the point where he has been removed from the Serious Repeat Offender Index list.

We have allocated over \$30 million for intensive case management to bring it to now 18 locations—Brisbane north and south, Caboolture-Moreton, Cairns, Gold Coast, Hervey Bay, Ipswich, Logan, Mount Isa, Redcliffe, Rockhampton, Sunshine Coast, Tablelands and Cassowary Coast, Toowoomba, Townsville north and south, and western districts. Stopping crime before it occurs is the most effective way to break the cycle of youth offending. It is why these programs and these teams are so important. I pay tribute to our amazing staff who are so dedicated to making a difference.