




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2023

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Inspector of Detention Services

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (2.18 pm): Where is the Inspector of Detention Services? That is the question being asked of this government and this Attorney-General. Yesterday ABC journalist Ellen Fanning, noting that the legislation had not been proclaimed, went on to say that she had been contacted five times by the Attorney's office to pass on the message to her listeners that nonetheless—

... they think it's an important role, it's vital though that the Ombudsman has the appropriate staffing, training, procedures and other administrative arrangements prior to commencing inspections.

But just what has been happening with the inspector of places of detention? Let us just remember that the bill was introduced on 28 October 2021. That is 17 months ago. The committee tabled its report on 21 January 2022. Debate began on 26 May 2022 and the bill passed on 30 August 2022. It was assented to on 7 September, and let us not forget the Attorney-General's media release of 30 August saying that all is going to be sweetness and light. In the budget last year there was \$9.4 million over four years and \$3 million per annum to establish the Inspector of Detention Services. Here is the problem: it is still not running. It is still not running 17 months after the bill was introduced, eight months after passage and after it was first promised in 2017.

This is important because it helps explain why this government is not only failing to protect Queensland victims of crime, it is also failing to address the causes of youth offending. Those members on the other side continually extol this Labor government's early intervention programs. The reality is far different. Yesterday I relayed the experiences of the young girl held on remand at Mount Isa. She was separated from her siblings and put into care with a known juvenile offender. The Labor government's failures left the magistrate no option but to remand her in police cells. Two recent cases highlight how badly this government is failing young people. Jack, a 13-year-old Indigenous Australian boy, who, according to reports, over a period of 60 days on remand spent 45 days in solitary confinement, including 22 days straight in isolation, while being held for minor offences. He flooded his cell with water from the toilet in desperation at a situation after allegedly being denied drinking water.

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have a vague idea that that matter is before the magistrates court. I do not know whether the sub judice rule is in play here. Can the member confirm that that is not before the courts at the moment?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Member, can you assure the House that it is not a problem?

Mr NICHOLLS: The matter has been dealt with by a magistrate and judgement has been delivered. On Radio National this morning the youth justice minister either could not or would not clarify the details, but when the report of this treatment came from the court itself, and it is the government's

own department that provides the information to the court, serious questions of competence arise. The second case involves another boy described as TA and this is what the court said in its judgement—

For 78 of 87 days (that is, for the overwhelming majority of the time you have been at CYDC on the last occasion) you have been confined in your cell for 20 hours or more each day.

Scott McDougall, the state's Human Rights Commissioner, has said these cases may even breach Queensland's Human Rights Act. The failure of this government to implement the Inspector of Detention Services is yet another reason why this government is weak on crime and weak on the causes of crime.