



Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 24 May 2023

MOTION

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Youth Crime

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (5.00 pm): I move—

That this House notes:

1. Attorney-General D'Ath weakened the youth justice laws in 2015-16 including abolishing breach of bail and bringing back detention as a last resort.
2. The members for Barron River, Thuringowa, Townsville, Keppel, Maryborough, Pine Rivers and Mackay voted to support those laws.

and calls on the government to listen to community concern over escalating levels of youth crime and consider all options to tackle the issue.

This is a serious motion addressing the huge community concern about the incidence of youth crime since the now recycled Attorney-General was first appointed in 2015 and started systematically weakening Queensland's youth crime laws, including reinstating detention as a last resort. It is a concern that is ongoing, despite this chaotic and crisis-ridden Labor government's desperate attempt to reset—a politically motivated attempt so blatantly obvious that the Queensland public sees straight through it. They are not buying it. It is the same circus, the same clowns and the same result.

At the outset it is worth noting what the Childrens Court report for 2014-15 showed was the outcome of the LNP's strong laws before this chaotic Labor government, under this recycled Attorney-General, started watering them down. I will quote from the report, because it says that the incidence of youth crime fell by five per cent in that year. The report states—

The trend line in relation to the ten year comparison of the number of juvenile defendants disposed of in all Queensland Courts shows a slight increase, although in 2014-15, there was a 8.7% decrease from the previous year. The trend line in relation to the ten year comparison of the number of charges against juvenile defendants continues to rise, although in 2014-15 there was a 4.9% decrease from the previous year.

There was an almost five per cent decrease in charges in 2014-15, so the trend line had been up but the year in which the LNP's tough laws were introduced the numbers were going down. These are the numbers that a chaotic and a crisis-ridden Labor government does not want to hear in relation to the youth crime crisis currently pervading Queensland.

This is one of the most significant issues directly affecting Queenslanders. It affects them whether they are at work, whether they are at home or whether they are at play. It is important no matter where you are in this state—in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Maryborough, North Lakes, Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Southern Downs, Chatsworth or even Clayfield. The numbers do not lie. This weak Labor Attorney-General's bill of 2015 that she introduced reinstated detention as a last resort, abolished breach of bail, reinstated restrictions on publishing identifying particulars of young people in the media, reinstated sentence review and abolished boot camps as an option. The figures show it has been an

abject failure. That is why we say that we should unshackle the judiciary. We should give them the opportunity to make sure the sentence fits the crime by removing detention as a last resort—something that this Labor government has opposed every day for the last eight years.

There were other changes in 2016. They closed the Magistrates Court when hearing youth justice matters so that there could not be reasonable and supervised reporting in the media of what was going on in the courts. They increased the age at which young people are transferred to adult correctional facilities, from 17 to 18, leading to overcrowding. In 2016 they increased the upper age of children for the purposes of the Youth Justice Act, from 16 to 17, meaning more overcrowding in our youth detention centres and another \$500 million being spent on building more youth detention centres, because they had not planned for it. They did not know what was happening, even though they were warned about it.

The numbers are clear. There was a reduction in offences each year from 2011-12. In 2011-12 they were down by 175. The following year they were down 210. The following year they were down 115. In the final year of the LNP government, 2014-15, they were down 598. What happened in 2015-16? They went up, by almost 400. The following year they were up by almost 600. The following year they were up by 1,600, and in 2018-19 they were up by 3½ thousand. The figures do not lie. This Labor government has failed Queenslanders. It needs to bring back detention and make sure people pay the price for their crime.