




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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## **CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDER REPORTING AND OFFENDER PROHIBITION ORDER) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.08 pm): I want to be crystal clear that I support the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 as originally presented with no amendments. What I do not support is the chaos that is created by this government every time it tries to crush the democratic processes here in Queensland. The character of this minister cannot be trusted. If there is any doubt at all about whether this minister can be trusted or whether he has the character to be a decent representative of the people of Queensland, we just need to ask the Pullen family what they think of this minister.

It was all about the optics. It was all about the press release. It was all about making sure that the news coverage was positive. It was not about the victims. It was not about the people who had suffered. That shows the character of the minister who has brought these amendments into this place. There are multiple pages beyond the original bill and most of them are on topics not connected to the bill. He has form on this. We are told that the reason this has happened is that it is urgent. If it was urgent, how come the minister denied me access to the watch houses in 2018 when we all knew that kids were being inappropriately locked up in those watch houses? How come the minister blocks ride-alongs with the police? How come he will not even tell us the police rostering from six months ago so that we can see what is genuinely driving this crime crisis?

Going all the way back to 4½ years ago, a human rights bill was passed by this parliament that was supposed to protect people who could not otherwise protect themselves. This minister and others put out all of these beautiful press releases and there was wonderful coverage to say, 'Look how compassionate we are; look how wonderful we are.' What do we find today? We find this government rushing through and crushing that process so they can take 10-year-olds and lock them up in cells that are not designed to hold a child. Where are the educational facilities in the watch houses? Where are the outdoor recreational areas in those facilities?

Those facilities are designed to hold violent adult offenders and people who are waiting to go to court. They will be there for maybe 24, 48 or sometimes 72 hours and maybe as long as five or six days, but not hundreds of days. Those facilities are not designed to hold a child, with adults just around the corner, overseen by people who do not have specific training to look after a child's needs in that environment. What kitchen facilities do watch houses have to ensure the nutritional needs of children are met if they are staying long term? They are not appropriate places. Not for a moment am I suggesting that some of those children have not done the wrong thing, but that is not a reason for this government to trample their human rights and do the wrong thing by them after telling the people of Queensland how much they care. What a load of rubbish that has proved to be.

All we have seen and heard are press releases and a lot of talk, but when it comes to action what do we see? We see no action to support their own process. Where did all this begin? Where did the watch house chaos involving children begin? It began with a knee-jerk reaction. As soon as the

government came into power they weakened the laws so we have more criminals. Then they moved criminals who were held in a separate block within Arthur Gorrie—17-year-old violent offenders—and put them in child detention with 10- and 12-year-olds, without building or adding a single facility. That happened years ago. Therefore, to suggest that this is now urgent because they cannot manage the population of child offenders is ridiculous.

If, when they made the policy to move those people out of that prison, they had started constructing a facility then there might at least be some excuse and there might have been a period of delay, but they did not start. What did they do? Nothing at all! Therefore, we see crime going up, we see more and more victims, we see victims' rights trampled and we see juveniles being inappropriately housed and inappropriately looked after. I know that there are some on the other side who, in their heart of hearts, would not support this. Nobody in their right mind could support putting children into such an environment. Where are the educational facilities? What is it going to do to them psychologically? How will we ensure those facilities are appropriate for them?

What of the transparency of this whole process? This House is here to defend the rights of people who do not have a voice. A 10-year-old who has committed a crime in this state does not have the voice to say, 'Can you help me out?' They are just going to be banged up in a facility that is designed to hold adults for a very short period yet they could be sitting there for months—although hopefully not years. The people on that side should be ashamed.

We should look at what this government said, when in opposition, about what is an appropriate way for this House to conduct itself. The current Premier stated—

As I look around the House I see a government that is arrogantly pleased with itself. I see a government that has just as arrogantly used its huge majority in this place to abuse the trust placed in it by Queenslanders at the last election.

**Mrs McMAHON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I am trying to find the relevance of the member's contribution to the long title of the bill or the amendments.

**Mr WATTS:** The relevance is very clear: this legislation has been rushed into this place and will be rammed through by the majority sitting on that side. They do not like to hear that they are acting just as arrogantly as any previous government ever has. At that time the Premier did not like the majority being used.

I ask the people on the other side: if this place had an upper house, what would happen now? This legislation would go off to be reviewed, people would talk about it, experts would be brought in and we would analyse it. We would not be back here with retrospective legislation trying to patch up mistake after mistake, as we have seen from the hopeless ministers on that side. They try to put together legislation but they constantly get it wrong. They have to come back into this place to introduce retrospective legislation to fill the gaps that probably would not have existed if the processes of this place had been followed appropriately in the first place. We have tried to tell them that this is a bad way to govern Queensland but they will not listen. We have victims whose houses are being broken into and now these guys are going to create more victims by locking up children. Their behaviour has not been appropriate, but now we are going to victimise them and persecute them outside of the parliament's own human rights—

**Government members** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Lui): Order! Member, you have the call.

**Mr WATTS:** This government is going to persecute children outside of its own human rights legislation, which has to be stood aside so that they can incarcerate children in inappropriate watch house facilities.

**A government member:** So you don't want them locked up?

**Mr WATTS:** I hear members opposite gibbering away, saying that I do not want them locked up. That is not true, but they need to be appropriately accommodated. This government has failed to plan, it has failed to organise, it is chaotic, it is hopeless, it is driven by media outcome and, therefore, it has not built appropriate facilities. They have overseen a massive increase in youth crime. They have moved youth offenders out of the adult prison system and put them into facilities that were already overcrowded. They have not invested. They have not planned. They are chaotic. They are in crisis and the people of Queensland are finding out that it is all about the media release and has nothing to do with what is actually going on.

What is actually going on in this state is that crime is going up and more victims are being created. The government does not care about victims. Look at the Premier's disgraceful behaviour yesterday with victims of crime. It was almost as bad as the minister's behaviour around the Pullens—maybe not

quite, but it was pretty close. It was pretty despicable behaviour. The people of Queensland should understand the character of the people who are in this executive. They do not care about children's human rights. The people on the backbench who support the trashing of children's human rights should hang their heads in shame.

What are we doing about providing educational facilities? What are we doing about making sure children are supported to rehabilitate? What are we doing to make sure we have long-term facilities that are suitable for children? That will be years away. They created this mess years ago but have done nothing to plan because a chaotic, hopeless executive is running this state. Their backbench know that they are an embarrassment and their backbench should not support this. The people of Queensland have found them out: it is all about the media releases. It should not be about abusing children, as they are.

*(Time expired)*