



Speech By  
**Jonty Bush**


**MEMBER FOR COOPER**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 April 2024

**MOTION**

**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders**

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (6.53 pm): Seven months ago, the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee was established to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and to support victims of crime and was comprised equally of government and non-government members and chaired by the member for Noosa. This was the first independently chaired committee in more than two decades. For many, this signalled a fresh approach and the government prioritisation of community safety. This rare and powerful parliamentary committee was asked to adopt a bipartisan approach to the issue of youth justice and propose reforms that would transcend the political arguments that can block meaningful and long-term reform. Government members have worked faithfully and cooperatively towards that outcome. I want to thank all of the submitters who have generously contributed their stories, experiences and ideas.

Our committee has met more than 25 times. We have held multiple workshops, received over 220 submissions and generated thousands of pages of work from public servants and those working at the front line with young people and victims. I do not underestimate the extraordinary investment of their time, and I thank them for their generosity.

The committee has had 16 public briefings over seven months across Queensland. Submitters repeated their hopes that all parties would put politics aside and work on a set of findings and recommendations that would help make Queensland communities safer. Disappointingly, that has not eventuated.

I stand here tonight making an extraordinary statement on an extraordinary but predictable outcome that the LNP members of the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee have now made it clear they will not be adopting an interim report, as requested months ago by the chair. Through this act, the LNP have let down every single victim of crime in Queensland. They have let down every one of the 300 young people sitting right now in Queensland watch houses and detention centres. They have let down those families. They have let down communities. They have let down Queenslanders.

I am going to reveal the lengths that the chair and members went to to produce a public report. Our first adoption meeting for the report was scheduled for Wednesday, 21 March. The report was not adopted, despite the chair and government members being ready. The chair provided an additional 14-day extension for members to review the report again. The second adoption meeting was scheduled for 4 April and proceeded for two hours. The report was not able to be adopted at that meeting either. The third adoption meeting occurred on Monday, 15 April for 2½ hours. Again the report was not adopted. The final adoption meeting occurred the following day for one hour and the LNP at that meeting voted to not adopt the report.

The work of this committee has created an incredible direct cost, but the indirect costs are far greater. We all made promises to victims and to young people. Tonight, my mind goes particularly to the people in places like Mount Isa where the community made it clear to us that they did not want us coming into town and wasting their time. I will quote what the chair told the public gallery in Mount Isa. She said—

We will be doing an interim report before the end of March with a series of recommendations because we understand the frustration, we understand the urgency and we understand the angst. We understand that everyone wants to get us doing the things that we can do right now.

Keeping Queenslanders safe is the government's greatest priority and it is an issue that should transcend politics. While I do not agree with all the recommendations in the report, it is important that findings from the committee are made, that they are published and that they are placed into the public domain for Queenslanders to examine and debate. The government members were committed to that process.

I would like to thank the chair of the committee, the member for Noosa, Sandy Bolton, for the professionalism she has displayed over the past seven months. Through this committee, the government invited members of the opposition to develop a set of bipartisan principles to reform Queensland's youth justice system and give certainty to stakeholders. I regret that the invitation was not taken up by the opposition, so I have regrettably come to the conclusion that this committee is no longer serving the interests of Queenslanders. It is no longer a vehicle for bipartisanship.

**Mr Lister** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Pause the clock! Member for Southern Downs, you are already on a warning. You can leave the chamber.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Southern Downs withdrew from the chamber at 6.57 pm.*

**Mr SPEAKER:** Members, if you are having difficulty hearing the person on their feet, it means the noise is too much. If you wish to speak, you have the ability to speak, and you can do that and make your contribution at that point.

**Ms BUSH:** It is no longer a vehicle for bipartisanship. It has been hijacked by the LNP's political agenda. If we cannot agree—

**Mr Purdie** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Ninderry, you are warned under the standing orders.

**Ms BUSH:** If we cannot agree on the release of an interim report, I do not see how we can agree on a pathway forward for this committee.