




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Record of Proceedings, 11 December 2025

JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (3.53 pm): I rise to address the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee's report. I remind the member for Nicklin that he is in government. You are in government now and you are responsible—

Mr Hunt: Excellent!

Ms SCANLON:—for the decisions you are making.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order, members! Member for Gaven, if you can direct your comments through the chair that will help everybody, please.

Ms SCANLON: I am sorry, Deputy Speaker. Those opposite are now responsible for every night mode and for every staff shortage in our detention facilities, so I would caution the member for Nicklin, particularly given some of the comments made by Mr Reilly during the examination of this report.

The oversight of the Queensland Ombudsman, and in particular the Ombudsman's expanded responsibilities as the Inspector of Detention Services, is incredibly important. Since December 2022, he has taken on the role of Inspector of Detention Services as an independent officer, one with power to go inside our prisons, our youth detention centres and our watch houses and report directly to this parliament about what is really happening.

I take some of the comments by the member for Nicklin. We have reports that transparently provide that information so that governments can respond to that and can improve, so that we know what is actually happening—not just what we might hope is happening but what is actually happening on the ground. A lot of progress has been made by the inspector, but progress in oversight does not mean progress in the system itself, and that is where some alarm bells begin to ring.

In the February hearing, the committee asked whether the inspector had been provided with any modelling about detention capacity, staffing requirements, or the likely impact of the government's Making Queensland Safer Laws. I also take the member for Nicklin's comments that the Labor opposition did vote for those laws, despite the fact that the member for Currumbin suggested we did not this morning, so they clearly are not on the same talking points. We were all in here and we all voted for it.

However, we did raise some very legitimate questions. We raised those questions with the Inspector of Detention Services. When I asked the Ombudsman in his role as inspector whether he had received any modelling at all—any modelling at all—about these laws, the answer was stark: no, none. Not a single forecast has been provided to the very officer responsible for safeguarding detainees and officers. It is a major legislative change, and yet the independent statutory officer tasked with oversight has been completely left in the dark. That is not a small oversight; that is a dangerous blind spot.

Then, of course, came the issue of night mode, which again I know the member for Currumbin does not like talking about. Throughout this report and during the committee's oversight hearing in February, the Ombudsman spoke about the impact of staff shortages, shortages the Ombudsman acknowledged still impact youth detention centres this year. Earlier this year—

Mrs Gerber: An all-time high under the Labor government.

Ms SCANLON: I take the interjection from the member for Currumbin. Earlier this year, under the Crisafulli government, I asked questions of the Ombudsman about the use of night mode at Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, a term that appeared in his earlier inspection reports. Night mode does not just refer to the standard overnight lock-in; it also refers to children being locked in their rooms during the day because there are not enough staff to safely supervise them—daytime, locked rooms, not due to behaviour, not due to risk, but because there is not enough staff. I repeat: not enough staff. In the oversight hearing, the Ombudsman confirmed that staffing problems mean they cannot get out of their cells as often as young people in other detention facilities. Staff shortages are locking children in their rooms and cutting them off from education.

This is not a minor operational issue; it is a fundamental failure in a system designed to rehabilitate children. It aligns with what the inspector has already documented. Children are spending long hours in isolation, with minimal meaningful human contact and reduced access to schools and programs. These are not theoretical risks. Some may shrug and say these are tough kids and tough measures are needed and, of course, there do need to be consequences—that is why these children are in detention. However, it cannot just be about punishment; it also needs to be about reducing reoffending and protecting the community. Unfortunately, what we have seen from this government is that that is not what they are interested in.