

Speech By

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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

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BREACH BAIL, GO TO JAIL AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms BOURNE (Ipswich West—ALP) (5.20 pm): I rise to speak on the Breach Bail, Go to Jail and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The people of Ipswich West, like all Queenslanders, want less crime and fewer victims. In conversations with residents, business owners and community groups, concerns about crime are raised time and time again. Almost two years ago we did not stand in the way of the LNP's first slogan. Like all Queenslanders, we are disappointed they have not delivered what they promised. As the *Courier-Mail* reported today, four in five Queenslanders say they do not feel safe under this government. We are now back here for this government's ninth attempt to introduce, amend or fix its signature youth justice laws with yet another slogan. Every patch-up this government makes to its signature legislation is an admission that the previous version did not work. If it had we would be debating something else. To be clear, when people commit offences while on bail there should be consequences. In many cases the question is whether they should have been granted bail in the first place. That is why Labor will support the breach-of-bail laws.

Let me put something on the record: those opposite have been misleading my constituents. In a truly pathetic, costly and underhanded campaign, they have told the people of Ipswich West that I voted against these reforms. We know that those opposite like to fudge the facts, as we have seen time and time again with their crime statistics, but their claim that I voted against this legislation is plainly false. The House has not even reached the voting stage. Let us not let the truth get in the way of a good story. If those opposite were confident in their own record on crime, they would not need to invent mine. As I have made clear, I will support this bill, but that does not mean I will give up my responsibility to scrutinise it.

As the committee heard during its inquiry, these proposed laws could overwhelm our system without proper planning—planning that the government either has not done or refuses to release. According to the government's own figures, last year 5,000 adults would have been automatically jailed under these laws, entering a system already operating at 136 per cent of cell capacity. Around 850 children would also have been placed in youth detention—roughly twice the capacity of the entire system. The Inspector of Detention Services has warned this government that large numbers of children may end up being held in police watch houses, placing further strain on our policing infrastructure.

When the Attorney-General was asked whether modelling had been done on the cost of these laws, she did not answer. This is becoming a concerning pattern of this government. Transparency matters when it comes to major changes to our justice system, yet time and time again Queenslanders are denied access to the analysis and modelling underpinning this government's reforms that could have far-reaching consequences. Even the Queensland Police Union told the committee it was deeply concerned, warning that without urgent investment in additional remand infrastructure there was a significant risk this bill would not deliver what it promises.

A failure to plan will expose our police, detention workers and prison officers to a greater risk of assault through overcrowding and unsafe conditions. These are the people we ask to keep us safe. Residents of Ipswich West work in the Wacol correctional precinct. They go to work every day in some

of the toughest conditions in the state and they deserve to come home safe. Six hundred and twenty prison officers from 14 centres across Queensland were surveyed by their union. More than nine in 10 said their centre could not safely accommodate more prisoners without additional staff and resources. The Australian Workers' Union told the committee that our youth detention centres are already at breaking point and that there were more than 500 serious assaults on workers in the past 12 months, yet, as we have heard from the government's own numbers, this bill could double the number of young people in custody without the workforce to match.

We have a mandated safety ratio of one worker for every four young people. How could that possibly be maintained without a serious increase in staffing? If additional workers are not provided, this government will be creating an environment in which the safety of both workers and young people is put at risk. That is not a sustainable solution and it is certainly not a safe one. We want safe workplaces and we want detention that serves a purpose. That time should be used to address the causes of offending through education, treatment and rehabilitation programs so that when young people leave custody they have a genuine opportunity to make better choices and build a different future. A child sitting in a watch house for weeks on end with little or nothing to do is not detention with purpose. It does nothing to address offending behaviour; it simply increases the risk that they will return to crime, creating more victims and making our communities less safe in the long run.

While we will not oppose this bill, there are three things we want to see from this government. First, give Queenslanders confidence that workers and young people will be safe. Show us where the extra capacity is coming from. Show us the additional staff, the additional beds and the modelling underpinning these changes. Second, deliver early intervention and prevention, both in the community and in custody. Time and time again we hear from experts that the greatest gains are achieved through early intervention, rehabilitation and diversion, yet, as outlined in the Queensland Audit Office's report, more than 1,000 prisoners are waiting for rehabilitation programs. The government deferred $137.55 million for youth crime prevention programs from the budget into future years. If people are going to spend longer in custody, that time must be used for rehabilitation. If we want less crime, this government must deliver the early intervention it promised. Third, support Labor's proposal for an independent community safety statistics bureau so that Queenslanders can have confidence in the data being used to assess the government's crime policies. The people of Queensland deserve statistics they know they can trust—statistics that are free from the interference and spin that we continue to see from this government. If the government truly believes its approach is working, those opposite should have nothing to fear from independent scrutiny.

My constituents in Ipswich West are tired of slogans and political pointscoring. They want what all Queenslanders want: safer streets, fewer victims and a justice system that delivers real results. Labor will support this bill because there must be consequences for serious offending while on bail, but we will also hold this government accountable for ensuring these changes are implemented safely, backed by proper resources and delivered in a way that protects the community, supports our workers and reduces the number of future victims.