

Question on Notice

No. 736

Asked on Thursday, 17 October 2013

MR JUDGE asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (MR BLEIJIE)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Attorney-General's latest announcement to name and shame juvenile offenders—

What direct evidence is this initiative being based upon validating it has a positive effect on reducing juvenile crime and anti-social behaviour?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Yeerongpilly for his question.

Queensland is experiencing a revolving door of repeat young offenders. The reforms that this Government are introducing will strengthen the youth justice system to deal appropriately with recidivist young offenders. It is clear that current responses to youth offending are not adequate to address the increasing seriousness of offences that are being committed.

While there are fewer young people offending, those who are offending do so more often and commit more serious offences. There is an emerging pattern whereby a small percentage of young people are responsible for a high percentage of offences committed. For example, in 2012-13, approximately 10% of all young offenders were responsible for almost half of all offences committed. The focus of the present reforms is on responding to these young offenders.

The expansion of the naming and shaming provisions forms part of a raft of reforms resulting from a review of the *Youth Justice Act 1992* (the Act). In turn, this review forms part of the larger, innovative strategy to transform the youth justice system. This strategy will culminate in the *Blueprint for the Future of Youth Justice* (the Blueprint) which is expected to be released in early 2014. The Blueprint will also focus on early intervention to address young people's behaviour and identified circumstances before they become entrenched in the justice system.

The naming and shaming of first offenders in the youth justice system will remain prohibited, subject to the current provisions of the Act. This will serve to provide first offenders with the opportunity to rehabilitate and make better choices.

However, the reforms will permit publication of repeat offenders in order to both make them accountable for their behaviour and to set a strong deterrent against further offending.

This reform strikes the balance between providing a young offender with the opportunity to rehabilitate and ensuring that our communities are safe from recidivist offenders.

In addition to the naming and shaming amendments, a new offence will be created for circumstances where a child offends while on bail for another offence. The offence will carry a maximum of one year in detention. Again, the creation of this offence targets repeat offenders.

Further reforms include:

- allowing childhood findings of guilt to be admissible upon sentencing as an adult;
- the automatic transfer of young people, who reach maturity from youth detention, into adult correctional facilities; and
- removal of the principle that detention is an option of last resort for consideration by courts upon sentence.

These amendments allow authorities to respond quickly and effectively to serious and repeat offenders while ensuring that at-risk young people are diverted away from the system through early intervention and reintegration into the community.

Other areas that will be considered in developing the Blueprint include:

- identifying future areas of law that the community consider need reforming to achieve better outcomes;
- a plan to work closely with partners to address the causes of crime and manage the demand for youth justice services by moving young offenders quickly through the system and by providing the right support to young people at the right time; and
- investigating new ways to invest in the non-government sector to improve services and cost efficiencies.

Through collaboration and community input we will develop a youth justice system that will hold young people accountable and reduce re-offending while getting value for money from every dollar invested in the youth justice system in Queensland.