



The Hon Jarrod Bleijie MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

In reply please quote: 558960/1, 2492144

Your reference: 10.4 Petitions

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Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
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Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter dated 13 February 2014 to the Honourable Jack Dempsey MP, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, regarding Petition No.2222-14, presented to the Queensland Legislative Assembly, petitioning for an increase in Queensland Police staffing numbers allocated to the Ayr and Home Hill Stations. Minister Dempsey referred your letter to me for my consideration regarding the issue of strengthening penalties for break and enter offences.

This Government has acted swiftly and decisively to deliver on our pre-election commitments to ensure the safety, welfare and order of our communities. We have made major reforms to the criminal justice system to make offenders more accountable and to deter them from future offending. I wish to assure the residents of Ayr and Home Hill that we are serious about making Queensland safe for everyone and we will continue to be tough on crime.

We have introduced a suite of reforms to strengthen sentences through increased maximum penalties and the establishment of new mandatory minimum sentencing laws. In particular, since being elected this Government has introduced new laws that better protect police officers in the performance of their duties; strengthen the punishment regime for the offence of murder; target child sexual offenders; and target serious drug offenders, given the far reaching and often devastating consequences of drug use upon our society.

Importantly, on 18 March 2014, the Queensland Parliament also passed laws to ensure that for any offender convicted of any offence, prison is no longer to be regarded as a sentence of last resort. This is anticipated to result in an overall strengthening of the sentencing regime in Queensland, including for break and enter offences.

In many cases property offences such as break and enter are committed by young people. We have listened to community concerns about youth crime and have taken steps to tackle the problem head-on. The first steps were to introduce a trial of youth boot camps, which aim to instil discipline, values and respect through a highly structured program that involves the young person's family. Following early evidence of the program's effectiveness, we have expanded the trial of these boot camps so that more Queensland communities can benefit.

The *Youth Justice Act 1992* (the Act) has been reviewed and the Queensland Parliament recently passed amendments to the Act to improve community safety and ensure young offenders are held accountable for their actions. The changes include:

- opening the Childrens Court to the public and enabling repeat offenders to be publicly named;
- creating an offence when a young offender commits a further offence while on bail;
- automatically transferring offenders from youth detention centres to adult correctional facilities when they turn 17 years of age, if they have six or more months remaining to serve; and
- making juvenile findings of guilt admissible if the same person is later sentenced for offences committed as an adult.

The Act was also amended to require the Childrens Court to order that repeat young vehicle offenders who live in a prescribed area participate in a youth boot camp program as part of their sentence.

The next stage in reducing youth crime and transforming the youth justice system is to finalise and implement the *Blueprint for the Future of Youth Justice in Queensland* (the Blueprint). The Blueprint is a substantial reform strategy that shifts the focus of the youth justice system from responding to crime to also addressing the causes of crime.

I thank the petitioners for raising this important issue.

Yours sincerely



JARROD BLEIJIE MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice