



Speech by

## Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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### JUVENILE JUSTICE AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL; JUVENILE JUSTICE (SENTENCING PRINCIPLES) AMENDMENT BILL

**Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (12.06 pm): I rise to speak to the cognate debate on the juvenile justice bills. While I support the general thrust of the government's juvenile justice bill, I do not think it goes far enough in addressing youth crime. I support the opposition's amendments that seek to improve the act. There is no doubt that youth violence is on the rise and has been for some time, despite government claims to the contrary. Only the government with its head in the sand believes things are improving. It is also clear that this Labor government has failed to adequately address youth crime in Queensland. Much more must be done by the government—for example, in terms of youth crime prevention and appropriate sentencing.

The youth crime rate in Queensland has grown steadily over the last decade or so. The number of young people charged by police with an offence grew markedly—from over 30,000 in 2005-06 to in excess of 36,700 in 2006-07. The number of young offenders processed through the Children's Court rose by 2.6 per cent in 2006-07. Further, the period 2006-07 witnessed a fivefold increase in homicide and related offences.

Despite the best efforts of our valiant and hardworking police officers, the police report that violence levels among young people continue to climb. The police at times express frustration at the way in which the system is failing young offenders. My own experience in trying to help offenders to assimilate into the community after spending time in detention has shown me that they get little or no support. It has been more a matter of luck than good planning that has caused offenders to make a successful new start.

I wish to focus my remaining comments on youth violence and juvenile justice through events and incidents in the Redlands. In 2007 a youth violence forum took place. Community leaders from Cleveland gathered to consider the issue of youth violence and find ways to address the increasing incidence of violence amongst young people. A good number of community leaders and others from a variety of professions and backgrounds contributed to the discussion regarding the issue of youth violence. The forum confirmed that a holistic approach was required to reduce youth violence. Some key areas were identified: crime prevention, the influence of positive parents, the significance of the place of young people in society, responsible attitudes towards alcohol and drugs, among other reasons.

The most pivotal event regarding youth violence in Redland City was the death of Matthew Stanley in 2006 at age 15 and the resultant formation of the Matthew Stanley Foundation by his father, Paul Stanley, and I dedicate this speech to the memory of the late Matthew Stanley. Matthew Stanley was bashed to death by a drunken 16-year-old at a teenage birthday party in Alexandra Hills. The attacker was convicted of manslaughter in November 2007 and was committed to juvenile detention.

On a personal note, Matthew's death had a great impact on me. Any parent of teenagers knows the sinking feeling of waiting up for them to come home, often late at night after weekend parties. I remember the news report of Matthew's death and the deep feelings of sadness that it set off inside of me. Matthew's death has been talked about many times in our family home.

To add to the tragedy that the family felt, under the current system the young person who committed the crime was released from detention earlier this year. Paul Stanley was dismayed that his family was not included in the detention release plans for his son's killer. Further, he feared that his son's attacker might live nearby Matthew's family and friends after his release. Despite Paul having applied to the Queensland government's victims register, which should have alerted the family to the offender's status, Mr Stanley felt that he had been kept out of the loop by the judicial system. It was only a chance discussion with the investigating officer in charge of Matthew's case in which Paul asked when the offender was getting out that revealed the facts. Mr Stanley said, 'I could have walked out of a shop at Alexandra Hills and bumped into him, and to me that's wrong.'

What is clear from the Matthew Stanley case is that the system did not sufficiently take into account the concerns or feelings of the victim's family. In Paul's view, it gave his son's killer a too-comfortable return to the community. Communities and youth minister, Lindy Nelson-Carr, admitted that the victims register system reserved for specific juvenile cases had failed the Stanleys and that people were slipping through the system.

I would like to go on the record as acknowledging the great work of Paul Stanley to educate young people about youth violence. The Matthew Stanley Foundation is actively educating young people across Australia about the dangers of youth violence. In summary, while I support the overall intent of the government's bill, I am disappointed that it does not go far enough.