




Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2019

### **YOUTH JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (4.27 pm): I too rise to address the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. With the integrity crisis that is all but dominating everything in Queensland parliament and certainly across the state at the moment, it is tragically too easy to forget the youth justice and crime crisis that has equally engulfed the state and, indeed, the Labor government. Sadly, it is a crisis of the government's own making.

For starters, on taking government in 2015, the Labor government scrapped the LNP's budgeted plans to build extra capacity within our existing correctional centres and to build new prisons. On top of that, it is now wasting \$110 million of taxpayers' dollars to cancel what is one of the safest privately operated prison contracts in the world and turn it into what will ultimately be a highly unionised public prison, again, with no additional cells. At the cost of \$110 million—no additional cells.

The Labor government then made the decision to move 17-year-olds from correctional centres to youth detention centres. Whether or not you support that, if you are going to make that decision clearly there has to be an implementation plan about how you accommodate 17-year-olds within existing detention centres while still allowing for growth in detention numbers through juvenile crime. As such, there is no capacity within the state's existing correctional centres, so kids as young as 10 years old are turning up in watch houses—sadly, some for as long as 45 days.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. There is far too much noise in the chamber. If you want to have a yarn, take it outside.

**Mr POWELL:** I repeat: as a result of these decisions there is simply no capacity in our correctional centres, so kids as young as 10 years old are ending up in our watch houses for prolonged periods—one child for as long as 45 days. There are claims that a young girl was forced to share a cell with two alleged paedophiles.

That is what has brought us to this point and the need for a legislative amendment, but what is the solution being proposed by the Labor government? In one instance, it is to relax the bail laws even further. That is not the answer for my communities in the electorate of Glass House; that is not the answer for the community of Townsville; and that is not the answer for other communities around Queensland. We are all equally dealing with a crime crisis in this state. Statistics indicate that crime is up: robbery, 128 per cent; armed robbery, 88 per cent; unlawful use of a motor vehicle, 49 per cent; assault, 33 per cent; serious assault, 31 per cent; and unlawful entry, 34 per cent. I have to admit that that is reflected locally within the electorate of Glass House.

For the first time in the 10 years that I have had the honour of representing that seat, crime is now the predominant issue across the electorate. It is why a community meeting was held at Glass House Mountains, led by scared residents who have had their second home invasion within the past five years, to try and encourage community interest in again establishing a Neighbourhood Watch

presence in that area. It is why we are getting spates of crime in towns like Wamuran and Mooloolah Valley, which are at the end of police station catchments. Criminals know that police response time to get to areas like Mooloolah Valley, Beerburrum and Wamuran from stations at Caboolture, Woodford and Beerwah is at its longest at those locations. At the same time, our investment in police is declining. We have fewer police per capita. We do not have enough vehicles. Officers who are sent to task forces and who go off on leave are not being replaced.

With all of this crime occurring, I repeat that the solution is not therefore to let repeat offenders back onto the streets of Queensland and Glass House; it is about holding offenders in appropriate facilities. I admit there is a balance that needs to be met here, but it is about holding offenders in appropriate facilities. For adults that is prison or a watch house; for juveniles that is a detention centre, not a watch house. I support the two amendments foreshadowed by the shadow Attorney-General. The first is to restore breach of bail as an offence. We cannot have repeat offenders back on the streets of Glass House, but at the same time we cannot have children spending extended periods in watch houses. If the Labor government had committed to what the LNP government had done in our term of government—build additional capacity in prisons, correctional centres and detention centres around this state and not wasting taxpayers' dollars on publicly operating prisons—then we could have a solution that ensures that children do not need to spend time in watch houses. In the meantime, it is our responsibility to ensure that those kids are not in there for any longer than 72 hours maximum, and therefore I also support that amendment being moved by the shadow Attorney-General.

We have a youth justice crisis. We have a crime crisis in this state, and sadly this legislation demonstrates that the Labor government is simply not up to addressing these crises.