

08 November 2004

Mr N Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 1 October 2004, forwarding a copy of Petition Numbers 371-04 and 372-04 lodged by the Member for Mackay in Parliament on 29 September 2004, concerning the consideration of young persons under the criminal justice system.

The comments contained within the petition are welcomed. It is important that the community has the opportunity to request that the House focus on the significant issues impacting on juvenile justice and find ways of reducing the contacts young people have with the criminal justice system.

While the relevant legislation exists to deal with young offenders, it is important to recognise that international and Australian experience has repeatedly demonstrated that most young people appearing before the criminal courts cease committing crimes after a small number of appearances. It has been commonly found that young people who are institutionalised experience considerable difficulties successfully reintegrating into the community. For these reasons, it is considered of paramount importance that young people perpetrating minor offences are dealt with within the community by way of such procedures as a caution or community conferencing.

Many programs under the Queensland Crime Prevention Strategy are early intervention programs designed to address the causes of crime. Experience here and overseas demonstrates that early intervention programs are the most cost-effective and successful programs for addressing the fundamental causes of crime and are the most likely types of programs to provide a beneficial long term impact on community safety.

I acknowledge that issues surrounding juvenile justice remain a challenge for the community as a whole, and I can assure you that the Queensland Government is constantly striving for new and innovative ways to meet this challenge.

I thank the petitioners for taking the time to Petition the Queensland Government on this issue. Their input and concern for the community are appreciated.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Warren Pitt
Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors