



Speech by

**Hon. M. FOLEY**

**MEMBER FOR YERONGA**

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Hansard 25 November 1999

### **INCREASE IN CRIME**

**Hon. M. J. FOLEY** (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (6.51 p.m.): The previous speaker in this debate found it staggering that the One Nation Party should be supporting the amendment moved by the Police Minister. She also said that she was astounded. I am not surprised that the National Party and the Liberal Party are astounded; because if one examines the text of their motion tonight and contrasts it with the amendment moved by the Police Minister, one sees the difference between the doom and gloom coming out of the National and Liberal Parties—the bankruptcy of ideas and policies—and, on the other hand, the action being taken by the Labor Party in Government to increase police resources and to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.

It is good to see the member for Caboolture and members of the One Nation Party giving credit where it is due. This debate should be about what is to be done. And what is to be done is precisely what the Government has sought to address: to be tough on crime. Earlier this evening, legislation was passed that increased the penalties for child cruelty—tough on crime. But even if we see significant increases in the number of persons incarcerated, as we have seen over the past five to 10 years, we need to go a step further than that and to be tough on the causes of crime.

Look, for example, at the chronic unemployment which has caused such social hardship, often in the electorates represented by members of the Labor Party and by members of the One Nation Party. I am not surprised that the National Party and the Liberal Party are out of the loop, because they stand for nothing, they have no policies, they do not address the underlying social causes, and they do not seek to be tough on the causes of crime. Look at jobs, look at family support, look at urban renewal, look at the work of the Beattie Labor Government in its Crime Prevention Task Force. It is through such positive measures to be tough on the causes of crime that we see some action being taken.

For example, look at the effort being put in through the initiative with respect to drug courts—to be tough on the causes of crime, to break the cycle, to do something positive. Look at the initiative with respect to drug diversion—to keep people out of the criminal justice system and to divert them from the cycle of violent crime and from involvement with the criminal justice system.

But let me illustrate this proposition by an example. What is at the core of this Government's response—and it is what the Liberal Party and the National Party find so hard to understand—is a coordinated approach drawing on different portfolio areas. For example, look at the problem surrounding the negative publicity in the Slade Point area of Mackay, where the levels of property and street offences committed by a group of youths known as the Slade Point Crew received much publicity during 1997 and 1998. Police, youth agencies and residents were able to identify a core group of six unemployed males who police believed were directly responsible for the problems in the area. Following two open meetings, a plan was developed to address the needs of those youth. The Youth Employment Training Initiative was developed with the aim of providing young people with employment, training and support designed to suit their individual needs, their interests, and to break the cycle of unemployment, poverty and crime. And what has the outcome been? What are the measures of this action? Four of the eight young people who became involved in the YETI vocational training course are employed in meaningful jobs, traineeships and apprenticeships, an additional two have successfully

completed pre-employment training, and the Slade Point Crew has ceased to exist. Police have reported a drop in the number of break and enter offences, theft and graffiti vandalism.

It is all very well for the National Party and the Liberal Party to come in here with their usual doom and gloom. The question is: what is to be done? This motion quite correctly commends the Government for its policy of being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. One sees in the Government's Crime Prevention Strategy a willingness to tackle those hard social issues, like the urban renewal program at Riverview and at Manoora in Cairns. It is through such measures that Governments can make a difference. Those opposite still believe in the bankruptcy of the old laissez faire approach to social problems, but we believe that Governments can make a difference.

Time expired.

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