



Speech by

Mr ROB MITCHELL

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard 2 March 2000

JUVENILE OFFENDERS

Mr MITCHELL (Charters Towers—NPA) (7.10 p.m.): Residents and business owners in Charters Towers are sick and tired of the continuous spate of break and enters and other crimes committed in the city by juveniles. I fear that it has reached the point at which those people are about to take matters into their own hands. They are saying, "Enough is enough." They feel that, for many years, they have been really let down by all Governments.

Only last Monday, a publican in Charters Towers was assaulted when he surprised a young Aboriginal person trying to pry open his doors with a crowbar, which he then used to knock the publican unconscious. This is only one of the many incidents that are happening every weekend in Charters Towers, and I know for a fact that other towns and suburbs throughout the State are faced with the same problem.

People and police are continuously being frustrated by the revolving door scenario of youth offenders being let off by the courts and back on the streets within hours of their arrest. That is not good enough. Offenders, whether they are adults or juveniles, need to know that if they are apprehended or caught they will be punished in some way, shape or form. That is why I was pleased to learn that the State Government has committed \$1m to the trial scheme Project Australia, in other words a boot camp, along with \$2m in funding by the Federal Government.

For many years, I have been a great advocate of such a scheme. When the coalition was in Government, I even looked at a few areas in the country where such camps could be set up. As we cannot lock the young offenders in jail and as the hopeless community service scheme is a huge failure, I am in favour of the establishment of the boot camp linked with mandatory sentencing as an alternative to jail sentences for juvenile offenders. These camps need to be positioned strategically throughout the State so that those juveniles who are admitted to the program would be able to offer their services to assist in clean-ups after natural disasters such as the ones we have witnessed in Queensland over the past few months. Actually, the WORC program is doing that type of work. I believe that is a great opportunity.

Time expired.
