



Speech by

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SUNSHINE COAST YOUTH CRIME

Miss SIMPSON (Maroochydore—NPA) (7.26 p.m.): The Beattie government's failure to target youth crime issues on the Sunshine Coast is astoundingly bad policy. This week, the Labor government announced that a range of other areas would receive youth crime prevention funding and that these communities would in fact be target communities. But the Sunshine Coast was not included among this number. That is extremely short-sighted.

Despite the fact that most young people are law abiding, there is a growing and significant youth crime problem on the Sunshine Coast. It has some of the worst juvenile crime figures. I am calling on the state Labor government to properly fund intervention programs on the Sunshine Coast to help nip in the bud troubled youths' downward spiral into a life of crime.

It is also totally stupid to put young people into a youth shelter that does not have properly funded programs to break the cycle of personal trouble. They do not even have room to bounce a basketball, but they have plenty of time. We know that there is a growing problem with chroming, with kids getting access to paint solvents and other substances and basically blowing their brains out. The programs to assist them in getting off these substances and divert them into more worthwhile activities simply are not there.

It is also incredible that a region that has a high rate of juvenile crime such as the Sunshine Coast has not received funding to set up community conferencing to bring victims and their juvenile offenders together to impress on the offenders that their crime has an impact. The police want to see this happen. Many victims want this choice. It is provided for in state legislation, but it is not funded to occur on the Sunshine Coast.

Why have legislation if the government does not implement the programs that are supposed to come under it? I have raised this issue a number of times. I have met with police and I have met with the Department of Families. I have written to the department with particular regard to the youth shelter problem. If we have a lot of young people in emergency housing but we do not provide the necessary intervention programs, more problems can be created than we are trying to solve. I know that workers are trying to do their best to help these young people, but for them to be in a situation where they literally do not have any recreational area other than outside the shelter is a recipe for disaster. It has impacted negatively on the community and it is not helping those young people.

I renew my calls for assistance from the government to address the issue of appropriate emergency housing for youth, not the creation of other mini institutions that in themselves are problematic. Money must be applied in the area of youth conferencing. I have called for this before and I am again calling for it. I appeal to my other colleagues across the political divides on the Sunshine Coast to support me on this issue. I will certainly be following up this matter with them further because if we break the cycle of youth crime we are potentially stopping another generation of criminals, or lessening the chances of these young people growing into adult criminals. At the moment, we have no funding to implement the community conferencing. That is a backward step.