




Speech By  
**Curtis Pitt**

**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

---

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENTS**

**Youth Crime**

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.09 pm): I rise with a heavy heart to speak about the tragic consequences of youth crime in our community following the recent death of a 15-year-old girl whilst travelling in a stolen car at Walkamin on the Atherton Tableland. My condolences go out to all the families affected by this unnecessary loss of life. The lives of these kids, their friends and their families have been changed forever. I will never condone the theft of property and I am confident that the justice system will ultimately deal with this tragedy. I want it to be clear that my remaining remarks express my concerns about youth justice more generally.

My fear is that some of the LNP members, particularly in Far North Queensland and other regional centres, are whipping up fear in the community over youth justice issues. I think they need to start acting responsibly as members of parliament. No doubt crime is an issue in many areas of Queensland, but to have elected politicians calling marginalised youth 'little grubs' to grab a headline does little to improve the situation. Media grabs are all the LNP has left because they do not have the solution they promised at the election. If anything, the problem is only getting worse. In October last year, then police commissioner Bob Atkinson said that 'this is the first time in perhaps even slightly over a decade—perhaps 12 years—where we have seen a jump and a spike like this'.

The Labor Party funded many successful programs to reduce crime which have all been cut since the LNP was elected—cuts to community and NGO groups focused on cutting youth crime; cuts to Skilling Queenslanders for Work; cuts to youth justice staff and cuts to youth justice conferencing. The Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative was one concrete way young people could receive training or other support leading to a job, and encouraging and equipping people to take up employment is one definite way to address offending behaviour. It is no secret that the Labor opposition holds a preference for youth justice conferencing as an early intervention tool and an alternative to punishing young offenders in court.

So what have these cuts been replaced with? One boot camp with five young people in it and another boot camp that finally has a location but as yet has no participants. This government is so focused on cutting good programs that it struggles to deliver its questionable ones. On 15 November 2012 the Attorney General said in parliament—

My department will now work closely with the service providers to ensure that the youth boot camps are up and running by early January 2013.

The Attorney now hopes the Cairns boot camp will be operational nearly three months late. On Tuesday the Minister for Police surprised us all when he proclaimed—

The Government's boot camp trials are also up and running.

He then went further and stated—

If these trials continue to be a success, it is the government's intention to expand them.

Then finally today the Attorney-General announced the Cairns location for a maximum of five youths. Perhaps one saving grace is that it seems, despite the military style boot camp that was paraded about by the LNP before the last election, many aspects of the former government's early intervention approach have been incorporated into the LNP's proposal, which has previously been presented by the LNP as the get-tough alternative. It is clear the LNP are focused on hype and spin rather than reducing crime by supporting disadvantaged youth. I call on LNP members to properly represent their communities and focus on successful programs rather than untested programs they cannot even deliver.