




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Townsville, Youth Crime

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (12.06 pm): Youth crime in Townsville has been an issue over a number of years and continues to challenge the Townsville community. The former LNP Newman government could not fix the problem. Its failed holiday boot camps simply cost millions of dollars and our community continued to see and feel the effects of recidivism. However, after listening and working with our community, including respected Indigenous elders, department representatives from Child Safety, youth justice and police, the Palaszczuk government has a real plan to tackle the issues of youth crime in Townsville. Our Townsville Stronger Communities plan means a whole-of-government response to tackle the issues at the very core—the causes of youth crime that the Newman government did not have the guts or the intestinal fortitude to tackle. It was in the too-hard basket for the LNP. It was weak. The LNP failed. We know that this multiagency response will assist in reducing youth crime rates in the Townsville area. The LNP only wished it had thought of it.

This is the response following the community crime forum that we as government members in Townsville co-hosted just three months ago. Recent media has painted a negative and damaging image of Townsville, which in fact is a proud city for a number of reasons. We are a major economic driver through various industries such as our port, Lavarack Barracks, health in terms of our tertiary hospitals, science and innovation through our two universities and not to mention home to the premiership-winning North Queensland Cowboys—and may they win over the Broncos on Friday. We also enjoy being a major tourism contributor through many activities.

Like the 200,000 residents in our fine city, we choose to live and raise our families in our city in North Queensland. No-one should talk Townsville down. We are indeed a proud city that has challenges in employment and crime and our government has a clear plan to address both, particularly in the area of youth crime. Some in this place, like the member for Everton, seem to think that they have solved the issues through their holiday boot camps. They failed! Our government will build a stronger community in Townsville. We are getting on with the job of tackling the causes, particularly around youth crime, and building safer communities. Our plan includes tackling the problem from the bottom up, not from the top down, starting at the community level and assisting families in building a safer community.

I know that we can build stronger communities through having increased community policing visibility, like the community consultation groups that I worked hard to deliver in Thuringowa, or the mobile police facility, where our local police play an integral role in informing the community of issues of crime in our suburbs and capacity building by engaging with stakeholders in implementing crime prevention programs like Lock it or Lose it, or Neighbourhood Watch in our communities.

My goodness, who would not welcome an increased police presence in their community? It seems the LNP. The responses that we heard this morning from the member for Everton and the member for Clayfield to this QPS initiative sets back the validity of community policing, who are engaging with members of our community about crime prevention. Do those members, along with the negative reports in the *Townsville Bulletin*, realise that they are doing harm to these important Queensland Police Service initiatives? It means that the LNP does not support our police.

I know that the community policing board will offer much direction in providing a strategic plan to build a stronger community. I thank the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland. Like the member for Townsville, I also look forward to meeting with the directors-general of departments in the coming days to hear in detail how their agencies can play a role in identifying and targeting those high-offending youth and how strategies will be implemented to develop our real, on-the-ground, cross-agency Stronger Communities group. It is not, as the member for Clayfield said, a community forum; it is a departmental response to provide a safer and stronger community. The residents of Townsville should have faith that this Stronger Communities group will be an integral piece in our plan to manage youth crime. Once it is in operation, I believe that it will complement our community policing board.