




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2016

ADJOURNMENT

Townsville, Crime

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (10.49 pm): I rise tonight to speak on the subject of crime issues that have challenged Townsville and caused us so much grief in the past, particularly in relation to youth crime. As the member for Thuringowa, I have given a commitment to my electorate and constituents that I will be heard in Brisbane on this issue. I have been working on a number of fronts in regard to this issue, one of which was seeking more police resources in Townsville. That was raised after my many interactions with QPS, both senior and front-line officers and the union—you know, that union backing in our laws.

I had written to the previous minister just prior to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mark Ryan's, appointment seeking more police resources in Townsville for our RAP hub. I would like to acknowledge and thank the new minister for hearing our call for assistance in Townsville. Within two weeks he was on the ground making announcements of the 15 extra officers to be based in Townsville, the continuation of Operation Oscar Merchant over the summer holidays and beyond, and an appointment of a chief superintendent to be based in Townsville. I thank the minister for his commitment to helping us reduce crime rates.

I am proud to say that we are also making good progress on a number of other fronts on our fight against crime, including our whole-of-government Stronger Communities initiative that really is achieving results in addressing the causes of crime. Whilst we know that that whole-of-government approach—a first for Townsville—is making early headway, we cannot do this without community assistance. That is why I am proud to have backed in the Indigenous elders led Youfla, or Yinda, 'Back to Country' proposal that has been progressed to high level funding discussions with Premier and Cabinet. I am hopeful that this proposal receives funding for a pilot program that will see youth in or at risk of entering the youth justice system learning, working and coming back better people for their experience of this three-month program.

Uncle Alfred, Mr Wayne Parker, Uncle Rusty Butler—an Indigenous veteran of the Australian Army of 21 years—and Mr Noel Gertz are just some of our respected Indigenous elders, leading the way on this project. They know that there is an over-representation of Indigenous youth in the youth justice system and they want to be part of the solution.

I welcome their commitment and dedication to helping our community overcome crime issues. We recently did some media on my backing of their proposal where the irony of their program was apparent. It was given to the previous LNP government, but they rejected it. They did not support it. They went with their failed boot camp. It takes a Labor government to listen, consult and work with everyone in our community, and that is why I am backing in this proposal.

I am also backing in a number of other initiatives like the Ted Noffs Foundation Street University proposal. I thank Minister de Brenni and the Attorney-General for their input into that particular program, providing a safe place for marginalised youth. I look forward to speaking to locals at this weekend's community crime rally in Thuringowa and hearing from them on any issues that they have.