




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Thuringowa Electorate, Youth Justice

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (12.24 pm): I too join the member for Townsville to reflect on positive news and the work that our government is doing to tackle crime which has affected our great city of Townsville for a period of some years. Indeed, it is a positive indication that the work we are doing is gaining results in terms of reducing offending and reoffending. It is certainly something that the three government members for Townsville have spoken about in this parliament before. Crime issues also challenged the three previous Newman government LNP members for Townsville. They tried but dismally failed with their boot camp at Lincoln Springs and youth crime recidivism remained high, as we found out after the 2015 state election.

What we have done is what all good government members do: actually listen and work with the community, our valuable government agencies and front-line staff to reduce crime and help make our city a safer place to live. We know that the bulk of the work started with the government led crime forum which was held in Townsville. Hearing the community's direct concerns and working with people from across our broad community has certainly helped us pave the way forward, knowing that government alone could not achieve what we have done without the help of people in our community like our respected Indigenous elders and non-government agencies such as Queensland Youth Services in Townsville.

On Saturday, 4 March, *Townsville Bulletin* journalist Chris McMahon, who has followed the challenging issues of crime over the past year, reported on the good work being achieved by our local police and the Stronger Communities team which is collocated at the Thuringowa QPS RAP. This is our whole-of-government response—a first for Queensland—to tackle the issue of crime, and I table that article.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Townsville Bulletin*, dated 4 March 2017, titled 'Blitz curbs crime' [\[448\]](#).

The article states that we are seeing a decline in offending and reoffending rates since the introduction of government led initiatives in October 2016. As Chris reported in that article—

Crime has dropped significantly in the four months since the creation of Townsville Stronger Communities and the introduction of Operation Oscar Merchant.

The article further states—

In four months, those crimes have dropped significantly through the arrest of the region's most prolific offenders, the intensive case management of young people on the verge of a life of crime, and interagency support.

There are no illusions among the Stronger Communities Action Group and the police that the crime issues are solved—they are planting the seed for long-term solutions.

QPS inspector Glenn Doyle, who leads the team, said that their primary goal is to 'break the cycle of offending with these young people'. He went on to say—

Having all the agencies in the one room and coming up with a targeted approach on each young offender and their family was working wonders.

We know that there is much more work to do, and that is why we have formed the Townsville Stronger Communities group. We have asked for and received 10 extra Queensland Police Service officers; reinstated the Murri Court, Sentencing Advisory Committee and court conferencing which the former Newman government removed; asked for and received extra funding of \$7.3 million for Project Booyah; set up specialist magistrates youth court lists in Townsville; and recently opened the Safe Place in Garbutt. Importantly, we are working with Indigenous elders who want to be part of the solution with their back-to-country cultural Indigenous Yinda program. I give special acknowledgment and a shout-out—because I know they are watching today—to uncles Rusty Butler and Alfred Smallwood and Mr Wayne Parker and Mr Noel Gertz. Gentlemen, I am right behind your proposal. I hope it gains the funding that it requires as soon as possible, because I believe it is yet another positive step in breaking the cycle of crime.

We will not stop. We know that a complex issue requires a complex suite of programs and policies to make positive changes in the fight against crime. I would like to acknowledge each member of the Stronger Communities team and the executive team, led by Minister O'Rourke and coordinated by the Regional Director of Communities, Ms Sandra Moore. We meet every second Friday with the executive team to stay across the issues and be informed of other strategies the Stronger Communities team is implementing to tackle the causes of crime whilst ensuring that people are held accountable for crimes they have committed and that, importantly, victims of crime receive support and follow-up wherever possible.