




Speech By
Ray Stevens

MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH

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ADJOURNMENT

Neighbourhood Watch

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (6.01 pm): I rise to address the proposed crippling funding cuts to Neighbourhood Watch community programs across Queensland and the impact that those cuts will have on this invaluable volunteer group. Minister Mark Ryan was disgustingly proud to advise the House that he is cutting the annual budget for Neighbourhood Watch groups from \$500,000 a year allocated by the LNP to \$75,000 a year under Labor.

Throughout my time in local government and state parliament, I have been witness to the invaluable and dedicated work of Neighbourhood Watch groups and I am well aware of the value that these committed individuals place on making their communities safer—a sentiment that, unfortunately, is not shared by this apathetic and indifferent Labor government. I am outraged at the blatant lack of concern from those opposite about the dedicated work of Neighbourhood Watch groups across the Gold Coast and the rest of Queensland.

I have attended many Neighbourhood Watch groups—from Broadbeach Waters, Merrimac, Nobby Beach and Miami to name just a few. I ask this Labor government, particularly when the number of offences committed on the Gold Coast in 2015-16 is the highest that we have seen over the past 20 years, and with a rapidly rising population: how it can justify crippling a community program that is aimed at public safety? It is simply illogical.

Once again, the Labor Party demonstrates its inability to address the needs of Queenslanders and exposes its soft-on-crime, penny-pinching backwards approach to governance. A cut of this significance will hugely damage the hundreds of Neighbourhood Watch groups across Queensland that work to improve community knowledge of and involvement in crime prevention. That money goes towards activities and initiatives across the state. Neighbourhood Watch groups help provide resources that strengthen the indispensable connection between communities and police. Neighbourhood Watch groups give individuals a place to voice their concerns about local crime and they enable Queensland police to access valuable information and build valuable community relationships.

Recently, a member of one group on the Gold Coast expressed to me how totally devastating these cuts are to Neighbourhood Watch and how they are already having an effect. This October, for the first time in 10 years, the Gold Coast was set to host the annual Queensland Neighbourhood Watch convention. It was to be a very special event as this year marks the 30th birthday of Neighbourhood Watch in Queensland. Gold Coast district members have advised that, at this stage, it is likely that the convention will be cancelled as a direct result of funding cuts. Already, Neighbourhood Watch organisers are feeling the damage of this government's disgraceful decision.

The Gold Coast is home to roughly 50 Neighbourhood Watch groups—from Yatala to Coolangatta and across to Springbrook and Tamborine. Just last week I attended a meeting at Nobby Beach, which is in my electorate, where I was reminded of the ways in which Neighbourhood Watch groups provide not only knowledge and awareness of crime but also comfort and reassurance to the community. Neighbourhood Watch groups are an integral aspect of crime prevention as a whole. It is absolutely shameful that this Labor government and this police minister have taken a razor to Neighbourhood Watch and slashed funding.