




Speech By
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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Youth Crime; Rail Transport

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (2.37 pm): The high social impact from a lack of action on youth crime and people coming in from the Northern Territory has long since surpassed the tolerance of people in Mount Isa and now Normanton. There was another round of reports on addressing youth but nothing meaningful in terms of delivery. I am sorry to say that a heap of organisations in the north-west spend too much time at the desk. This is nowhere more evident than in Normanton recently when a small group of kids—everyone knows who they are—wrought havoc around town. No government organisation wants to take responsibility for them.

Youths in town are in need of a new system that is not binary in terms of locking them up and spitting them back out on the street—but they are too soft, so there are no repercussions for bad behaviour. Relocation sentencing remains one standout solution. An institutional type facility is taken from the urban areas and turned remote, dramatically reducing the security demands on the facility and opening up the opportunity for programs to be bolted on so that youths then start to learn how to pour a slab or strain a fence line rather than learn new ways to pinch a car or pinch petrol to sniff, as they do at Cleveland.

The problem, however, is not only with the youth. One is 10 times more likely to be a victim of domestic violence in Mount Isa than in north Brisbane, five times more likely to be a victim of property crime in Mount Isa than in north Brisbane and assault offences are 10 times more than those in north Brisbane, yet still we constantly battle to get adequate police resources. Another catalyst is the intervention in the Northern Territory, with alcohol bans and BasicsCards forcing many itinerants into Mount Isa. This not only displaces the problem while avoiding a real solution but also puts undue pressure on all our services and causes a lot of tension on services such as housing in Mount Isa.

Over the past couple of years, horrific crimes were reported to my office. Recently, one teenager was savagely beaten into intensive care by a large group of youths of his own age, even after his friends tried to save him. Last year, a 92-year-old woman was bashed and endured an attempted rape by a younger male from the Northern Territory. Last night, an 83-year-old pensioner was harassed by youths who broke into her house and stole just \$10. One man I know quite well, whose house had been repeatedly attacked by youths, suddenly decided to crawl back in the dead of the night and attack one of the people who had been repeatedly stealing from his place. Now he faces a prison term. This is a small snapshot of what those in this far-flung area of the state face.

Good people trying to make a living are asking for something small in return for their taxes and the royalties they produce from this area but cannot get the tools and resources to stay safe. It is not much to ask. People in my area get angry all the time and deserved some action on this years ago, not at some point in the future. To date, all efforts are well short of what is needed and require immediate action from both the Minister for Police and the Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence.

I raise yet again the great black mark on rail transport in this state that is the business impositions placed on operators such as Queensland Rail on the Great Northern Railway. This has been exacerbated further with recent interruptions from the flooding. By way of a segue, a very competent recovery appears to be underway there at the moment.

The situation was highlighted a few weeks ago when another road train driver tragically lost his life in a collision with a light vehicle. When does this start to be an acute problem for the government? Until they remove the ridiculous impositions placed on the operators of this line and, more importantly, Queensland Rail, we will continue to see more trucks on the road carting bulk ore and fewer wagons on the rail line.

There have been three fatalities in the past 18 months involving road trains and light vehicles. In most cases the collisions were caused by light vehicles and eventuated in the loss of a truck driver. Let me make it clear that there is no fault on the part of the truck drivers, as might be thought, when it comes to their ability. This is a direct result of complacency by government in letting too much business go onto our roads rather than by rail. This is mainly due to costs and constraints caused by the Queensland Competition Authority.

Waiting around for another year or two for a review is simply lazy when people are dying on our roads. What we have in this situation is a ratchet type mechanism where no contract on the rail line can be lower than the last one. There are fixed costs which are imposed on the users of the line. That is a unique characteristic of the Great Northern Railway. Nowhere else in Queensland does that situation apply. Whoever is left on the line gets lumped with more fixed costs. Then there are restrictions on backloading and the backloading is at full price. That is a disincentive for anyone to use the rail line. I warned years ago that we would see deaths on our roads if we failed to act. The government has failed to act and more people have died.