




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Record of Proceedings, 12 June 2019

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Police Service, Resources; Youth Detention

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (2.37 pm): It is a pleasure to follow the Labor member because we saw in his patch last week what happens when we stretch the thin blue line. We know that in the 2018-19 financial year the police resources have been under extreme pressure. In his patch last Friday night we saw a 24-hour police station close. A 24-hour police station closed because they have not delivered the police officers that were promised at the last election. The member should be ashamed. While he is writing letters congratulating his minister on things, he should write a letter—

Mr HARPER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take offence at what the member has just said and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stevens): Member, will you withdraw please?

Mr WATTS: I withdraw. What the member should be doing is writing to his minister and asking him to deliver the police that Townsville was promised at the last election but has been sadly let down by the Labor government.

Today I want to talk about the absolute failure around watch houses and youth justice here in Queensland. I spoke in this place on the Human Rights Bill and I gave fair warning that there were 10-year-olds incarcerated in Brisbane who had been flown from all around the state to get here, that watch houses were being used as a youth detention centre and that it was inappropriate. I have a minister who will not let me in. He will not let me hold the government to account which is the job that the Queensland taxpayers pay me to do—hold him to account for his complete and utter failure. It has been a drain on police resources. The overtime cost is just under \$1 million—\$927,000 in overtime for police to babysit these kids in the watch houses.

That is why the thin blue line is being stretched to the limit, and it needs to change. The minister needs to take responsibility for the drain on police resources this debacle has caused. There has been a complete lack of planning. A completely incompetent plan to take 17-year-olds out of jails has led to this crisis. It is a drain on police resources, a drain on police numbers and a drain on police morale. I am very concerned about the stress levels of some of the officers who have been serving in the watch house having to babysit 10-year-olds for 30 or more days. They were not trained for this. The watch house was not built for this.

This is a completely inappropriate use of a detention centre and is almost a breach of the government's own human rights bill. Despite their virtual signalling about how they are going to protect people's human rights they are locking up 10-year-olds in cells that were designed to incarcerate murderers. This is not the appropriate place for them and they need to do something about it. I can see no great solutions coming from this budget. A bureaucracy is being created but we are years away from solving the problem. I might add that when the 10-year-olds finally do get out of the watch house they will be the ones saddled with the \$90 billion debt and increased taxes that they will have to pay over an entire lifetime—

(Time expired)