




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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COMMUNITY SERVICES INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) BILL

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (12.32 pm): I rise to speak in the debate on the portable long service leave bill before the House today. I commend the minister for bringing this on. As someone who prior to joining the Ambulance Service struggled to get five years of recognised long service from another health sector, I wish this had been done a long time ago. I commend the minister for these amendments today.

I want to now speak to the youth justice amendments which I am particularly interested in and which go to the core of ensuring community safety remains a priority for this government. In Townsville we have been working hard in a number of areas to address the issues of youth crime. There is not one easy solution. We need to understand the causes of youth crime which are incredibly complex and often linked to family dysfunction.

We are a government that listens to the community and puts in place a range of programs to address the causes of youth crime, but we also need to ensure community safety. This amendment does that, particularly in relation to bail. To be more specific, it ensures that a person who poses a serious risk to the community must not get bail. We are going after the hardcore group of repeat offenders who commit a high percentage of youth offences. They are the ones causing our community grief and they are the ones we are going after.

These changes to the Youth Justice Act follow our government's announcement in March of a hard line on youth crime through our five-point action plan to target repeat youth offenders, including: tougher action on bail; a police blitz on bail; appealing court decisions where appropriate; a police strike team targeting high-risk offenders in communities like Townsville; and culture based rehabilitation through new on-country initiatives in the communities of Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa. Those on-country programs will commence in July. The car responder strike teams where police and youth justice workers team up to target high-risk offenders are rolling out across the state.

Members can clearly see that our government is not one dimensional like the LNP was with their poor attempt and failed efforts to address youth crime in Queensland during their time in government. The LNP left behind a legacy of failure. There was the multimillion dollar cost blowout for the failed youth boot camps that saw recidivism rates of 66 per cent. The LNP had a failed breach of bail policy which was weak and had little effect. The LNP can pretend to call it a breach of bail offence, but let us have a look at it.

The Newman government introduced an offence of being found guilty of another offence whilst on bail which did not work. It actually was not a breach of bail offence. The offence did nothing to deter or reduce crime. During the period it was in force, there were 185 young people across the state with a proven offence and of those 90 per cent reoffended within 12 months. In Townsville there were fewer than 40 people with a proven offence over a two-year time frame. That is fewer than 20 young people a year on average with a 90 per cent probability that they reoffended. This new legislation nullifies

breach of bail because those hard-nut offenders will not get bail. What we need is a suite of programs to address a complex issue backed in by strong legislation. Our government has delivered this, including through the youth justice amendments today.

In Townsville we have delivered over 100 additional police since 2015, including 53 in this term alone. This morning the police minister talked about the additional 20 police that I was able to deliver for the Rapid Action Patrol hub in Condon, which was only 50 per cent staffed thanks to the LNP. They talked up a big game but failed to staff that unit in their time in government. It took a Labor government MP to deliver adequate staffing.

In the Upper Ross I recently delivered a new police facility, increasing its staffing from two officers to 10. I thank the minister for ensuring community safety is a priority.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr HARPER: The LNP do not like to hear it, but we will get adequate staffing and resources.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Member for Nicklin, you are on a warning. I remind the member for Gregory that he has existing warnings in place.

Mr HARPER: Programs like Project Booyah and Transition 2 Success have proven to be a success, with over 70 per cent of participants not reoffending after completing these programs. That is a stark difference to LNP's failed boot camp legacy.

Our government is delivering on our cultural mentoring and on-country programs. We need to work hard to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous youth in our youth detention centres, but at the same time we need to ensure community safety is maintained. Our elders and representatives want to make change. I applaud their passion and dedication to make positive change. In just a few weeks we will see the on-country program delivered by whoever wins that tender. I know it will add a string to the bow of our suite of programs that tackle the causes of youth crime.

In Townsville our community was numb at hearing the devastating news of four young people who lost their lives in terrible circumstances as a result of a stolen car crashing. Nothing good comes from the death of people. I have been working very closely with a range of Indigenous elders and community representatives, particularly in the last two weeks given those absolutely tragic events in Townsville two Sundays ago. No matter which way we look at it, it was devastating to hear. We as a government must work even harder to never see these tragic events repeated. Nothing bad ever comes from doing the right thing.

Having attended very similar events in my former role where young people lost their lives in very similar circumstances, it is absolutely tragic no matter who is in government at the time. We have families who are now grieving. We need to be sensitive to our community. My heart goes out to those families who lost loved ones in what were tragic circumstances for all involved. Above all, we need to ensure community safety. Today we achieve that through delivering this legislation.