



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**


**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 26 May 2021

**MOTION**

**Youth Crime**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.35 pm): I rise in support of the amendment to the motion. We were here just over a month ago debating the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021. I supported this government's new youth justice laws. They are needed, particularly in Townsville. We have a serious problem up there and I supported those laws for the people of Townsville. I supported them because it is good government policy. The LNP supported them but they have come back in here a month later with some political stirring. The member for Burdekin in his contribution on the debate said that all levels of government need to work together. Can he pick up the phone and talk to the federal member who runs to Canberra—absolute coward—to say that we are not doing enough? We changed the laws and the LNP supported those laws. My stance on hardcore recidivist offenders remains unchanged.

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Buderim.

**Mr HARPER:** We need to hold them to account, lock them up and get them off the streets. These new laws target the hardcore 10 per cent recidivist youth offenders who commit around 50 per cent of the crimes.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Pause the clock.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** I will get to sentencing.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Everton, I ask that you withdraw your unparliamentary comment.

**Mr Mander:** I withdraw.

**Mr HARPER:** Those laws were needed to crack down on that hardcore group of youth repeat offenders to keep our community safe. I was with Assistant Commissioner Mark Wheeler and the minister in Townsville recently, and he said that those new laws are producing promising results by keeping offenders in custody and bail being refused. They advise that, in the 25 days since the new laws have been targeting those recidivist young offenders, more than 50 juvenile offenders have been in custody and over half of them remain in custody right now. That is because of those new laws. I see more reports of that in the *Townsville Bulletin*. Bail is being refused because they are a serious risk to the community. That was passed last year—that serious offenders must not get bail. What we have done is built on that with this new suite of laws. I expect the courts to meet community expectations and hold those people to account. We have given them the legislation and the tools to do that.

**Mr Mickelberg** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Buderim, you are warned under the standing orders.

**Mr HARPER:** I want to talk about our hardworking police. We have more than 700 police based in Townsville, and I know why we have got 700. We called for more and we got it—thank you, Minister. We got 53 in the last term with 150 committed this term. I know that because I remember doing a ride-along shift at the RAP Hub that was a half-baked idea by the LNP with only 20 officers. They said to me, 'This is not working. We can't actually go out and do the job.' I said, 'What do you need—20 more officers?' I got them; thank you, Minister. I advocated for that and got them. I got a new station in the Upper Ross which now has 10 officers.

**Mr Crandon:** The minister didn't give them to you.

**Mr HARPER:** No, we worked very hard for those; we advocate for our community. Let's have a look in contrast at what the LNP did. They hid their crime stats. They had failed bail—they called it breach of bail, but 90 per cent reoffended. To come back in here a month after passing their laws—where was their fight then? That was an absolute failure. Then there were the boot camps, and the member for Scenic Rim got up and said it was a success. We still have the Auditor-General report that showed that 70 per cent of people in those boot camps reoffended. That is a fail, just like you failed on bail.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Through the chair.

**Mr HARPER:** They went to close the police academy. We kept it in Townsville's hands and the LNP sacked the police. I knew senior police who lost their job under the Newman government. Half of those people opposite were sitting around the cabinet table then. We back police; they sack police.

I will continue to advocate for my community to make sure that we hold serious offenders to account. We have the new legislation in place. We have enabled the judiciary to sentence. I will continue to work for my community.