




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2022

MOTION

Cairns, Youth Crime

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (5.46 pm): I rise to support the amendment put forward by the Attorney-General. I am astounded by the temerity of those opposite that they would bring such a motion before the House. Who remembers the boot camps under the infamous Newman government? The then attorney-general, the member for Kawana—and I am surprised the member for Kawana is not contributing to this debate because he is normally part of the beating-up program—was the architect of the botched Kuranda youth boot camp, the plan to take troubled youth into the bush and treat them badly. It blew up in the LNP's face. I do not need to remind members of headlines like 'Teens recaptured after boot camp breakout'. The LNP's Kuranda boot camp had only been in operation for three weeks when the entire first intake managed to escape, arm themselves with a knife and rob a 59-year-old woman in her own home before they were caught by police. This was the way the LNP handled youth justice issues in Far North Queensland: extremely badly.

Those of us who live in Cairns will not be lectured to by the LNP on law and order or youth justice. Far North Queensland kicked out the LNP decisively in 2015 and kept them out in 2017 and again in 2020. When those opposite were in government did they deliver better housing? No! Did they deliver more nurses? No! Did they deliver more police? No! Did they take away frontline services? Yes! Did they cut support workers for Child Safety? Yes! Did they hide the crime stats? Yes!

The most northern LNP member is the member for Burdekin. If the people of Cairns want to go and see him, it is nearly a six-hour drive. If, as some in this House may want—and I note the member for Hinchinbrook up in the corner who is from the KAP. If, as the KAP would like, we had a North Queensland state, the KAP would be the opposition because they hold three seats. How many seats does the LNP hold in North Queensland? Two! They would be crossbenchers. Welcome to the opposition, KAP.

The LNP in North Queensland and Far North Queensland is irrelevant. The voters of Far North Queensland gave the LNP a go and they were sorely disappointed: Gavin King, one term; Michael Trout, one term; David Kempton, one term. Not only did it fail; the LNP is trying to stir up an issue in Cairns to deflect the focus from a dysfunctional Prime Minister and a federal member whose time has well and truly expired and needs lots of diversions like this in the upcoming election. Labor has a strong team in Far North Queensland with the member for Mulgrave, and I note that the member for Mulgrave is not even mentioned in the motion. Those opposite are not prepared to take on the Speaker but think, 'Let's just pick on three other MPs.' We have a great arrangement in Far North Queensland with the member for Mulgrave, the member for Cook, the member for Cairns and myself. We are a united team and we are a strong team, and that is why the LNP is 436 kilometres away from us.

We value the work our ministers do. Many ministers including the police minister and the child safety minister are regular visitors to our city. We work closely with the police. We regularly speak to police command. We regularly get updates on offending stats and briefings on operations. We support the judiciary and, unlike those opposite, we understand and support the separation of powers. We allow our magistrates to do their job.

Recently the death of a 14-year-old boy who was a passenger in a stolen car devastated our city. Once the tragic circumstances of his short life were made public, it turned the debate and touched the hearts of many Cairns residents. It diffused public anger and raised awareness of the complex reality of youth offenders. As local MPs we understand that. This is about more than the triggers and stats; this is about what brings people to be in those situations in the first place—cognitive impairment, poverty, overcrowding in housing, family dynamics. The people of Cairns know that it takes a village to raise a child and they know the answer does not rest with the LNP.