



Speech By  
**Dale Last**


**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 16 March 2022

**MOTION**

**Cairns, Youth Crime**

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (4.59 pm): I move—

That this House recognises the devastating impacts of youth crime on the people of Cairns and notes:

1. the member for Cairns' solution to the youth crime crisis was for constituents to 'write a letter'
2. the deafening silence of the members for Barron River and Cook and
3. the local community's cry for help leading to yet another crime rally on 2 April 2022

and calls on the members for Cairns, Barron River and Cook to admit they got it wrong and reverse their opposition to making breach of bail an offence for young criminals.

'We should not be afraid to go to sleep at night in our own home.' Those are the exact words of Sylvia Carswell of Cairns spoken at a crime rally on 18 February this year. From the outset, I want to issue a challenge to those opposite: debate the motion that I have just moved, defend the performance of your government and explain why Mrs Carswell and others live in fear in the Cairns community, or will you ignore them just like the victims of crime in other centres?

Mr Speaker, Cairns is in the grip of a crime wave. If you do not believe me, let me share some Queensland police statistics with you. In 2021, in the Cairns Regional Council area, almost 1,000 charges for unlawful entry were filed against juveniles. In the same period, 696 juveniles were charged with unlawful use of a motor vehicle in the Cairns Regional Council area. Of even more concern, 20 juveniles were also charged with dangerous operation of a motor vehicle, and we have seen the tragic consequences of that type of behaviour in that community in recent months.

Those figures should send a shiver up the spine of every member in this chamber. Sadly, they will come as little surprise to the people of Cairns who, just like the victims of crime in communities like Townsville and many other centres, woke today not knowing whether their house has been broken into or their motor vehicle has been stolen. If any member of this House needs proof, despite those horrific statistics Labor's so-called response is achieving nothing.

Let us talk about the first two months of this year. In January and February the number of robbery charges against juveniles is already 25 per cent of the total number in 2021. It is not only robbery offences; unlawful entry and unlawful use of a motor vehicle charges are also on track to eclipse last year. In short, Cairns is having its heart ripped out and the residents and the business owners in that community are saying, 'Enough is enough.'

Just this morning the police minister said that this government invests to ensure safety in times of emergency or crisis. Well, what do you call having 81 motor vehicles stolen a month? If that is not a crisis then what is? The people of Cairns and Far North Queensland want to know where the response is to their crisis, because there is absolutely no response from their local members. Maybe the minister has not heard what the local members have to say in this place when it comes to youth crime. You would expect that with crime so rampant they would be standing up in this place at every available opportunity.

Let me share this with the chamber. A search of the parliamentary website shows the last and only time the member for Cook has mentioned crime in a speech in this House was to oppose a motion calling on Labor to get serious on crime all the way back in 2020. The member for Barron River's results are even worse. There is not one speech showing up on the parliamentary website where he has referred to local crime—not one! At least the member for Cairns has mentioned crime, albeit back on 15 May 2019, when he spoke about steering at-risk people away from crime. Here we are three years later and clearly that has not worked.

The member for Cairns has form because he is quoted in the local paper on 21 February this year as saying he supports 'anything that supported the efforts of police', but he will not walk out his front door and go to a crime rally to hear from the people of Cairns who made it clear that they do support their local police, and the best that he can do is to tell his constituents to put their complaint in writing. That is right: when it comes to constituents, the member's diary is planned weeks in advance. Yet when two ministers jet into town a few days after the loss of a young life, suddenly the member materialises for a photo shoot.

It is time for the members for Cook, Cairns and Barron River to speak up for their communities because their communities need their help. While their communities live in fear, the members for Cook, Cairns and Barron River are silent in this House. In fact, you could say that they are asleep when it comes to crime, which takes me right back to where I started today—at least someone is sleeping, Mrs Carswell.