




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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MOTION

Youth Crime

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.50 pm): Hearing the member for Caloundra talk about the absolute disaster involving a jail in the suburbs and the money that was wasted in reverting it back to a watch house shows that they have no clear plan. They had no plan when they took 17-year-olds out of the adult prison system and put them into the juvenile justice system even though no additional beds were available. What did they think would happen? To make sure that the centres did not get as overcrowded as they later became, they watered down the legislation, as we heard from the member for Ninderry. They watered down the legislation so that the judges could not lock up juveniles—and what happened? With the failure to lock up juveniles, in Toowoomba we have seen a growth in recidivism rates from 33 per cent in 2016 to 64 per cent in 2021. Those are the recidivism rates 12 months after people had gone through a restorative justice process. It is a dreadful and damning indictment on the process that this government has put in place.

However, that is not the worst of it. The worst of it is that in 2020 their youth justice program had a recidivism rate of 100 per cent within 12 months. I repeat: 100 per cent. In 2021, it was 100 per cent. This Labor government is hitting targets of 100 per cent—100 per cent recidivism. That is how good their youth justice programs are. What do we see in Toowoomba? I will tell the House a couple of stories. These incidents happened in Toowoomba. The people who committed the offences have gone to court and are out walking the streets.

A woman, her husband and their two daughters had been out to lunch. It was daytime. They arrived home and found a strange car parked at the front of their house. The home owners' car blocked the exit. The husband heard people inside the home. He watched as two prowlers came out of the house with golf clubs, knives and bags of goods while two people waited in the strange car. They attacked the husband. His daughters and wife did not know what was going on and were desperately trying to work out what they were going to do. The strange car in their driveway could not get out because they were blocking it. What happened? The offenders ran up to the car in which the two daughters and the man's wife were sitting. Again, they have just been out to lunch, it was daytime and they were on their own driveway. The intruders attacked the car with golf clubs. They smashed the windscreen, they smashed the headlights and then the car was rammed by the other vehicle.

Those are armed and dangerous criminals. They are people who have been to court and have been found guilty. The police have done their job. The courts have done their job. However, this government has not done their job through legislation. This government is letting down the people of Toowoomba. This government is putting people's lives in danger in my hometown.

People who are on their own driveways are being attacked with golf clubs and knives because an offender has been caught and released, caught and released, caught and released—100 per cent of the time. We know who they are. We know where they live. We know their names. We have pictures of them on CCTV. This incompetent Labor government cannot do anything to stop them because they

introduced legislation that brings no consequences for actions. That is the problem. For the past 7½ years those young offenders—who are now 17, 18 and 19 years old—have been taught: ‘Do as you please. We will not punish you. We will let you go. If the police catch you, don’t worry about it. There’s nothing the court can do to hold you. Why? Because we watered down the legislation to let you out.’

How are we going to get ourselves out of this mess? The people of Toowoomba keep saying to me, ‘You have to do something about it.’ I do not know what else to do except to point out the damningly obvious to the incompetent Labor government that there needs to be consequences for actions. There are two courses of action that the people of Queensland can take. The first is that they need to make sure that criminals are held responsible for the crimes that they commit and are taken away from our communities if they are a danger to our communities. The other course of action needs to be that if the government cannot legislate for the safety of people in their own homes, in their own cars and on their own driveways, vote out the Labor government because they are incompetent when it comes to youth justice. There is 100 per cent recidivism in my town. People armed with knives and golf clubs are attacking people on their own driveways.

(Time expired)