




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 24 May 2023

MOTION

Palaszczuk Labor Government; Youth Crime

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.26 pm): I rise to oppose the opposition's motion and fully support the amended motion moved by the minister. The member for Nanango wants to give us a history lesson. I will give a history lesson to the member and all on the other side. I ask them to cast their minds back to 2013. The then member for Thuringowa, Sam Cox, said, 'Townsville is a war zone with 12- and 13- and 14-year-olds. Crime is out of control.' What did the then member for Mundingburra say? He was quoted in the *Townsville Bulletin* on 4 December 2013, after an 18-year-old stole a car with a baby in it. He said sentencing needed to be 'top of the discussion list'. He was outraged. He called for tougher penalties.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr Krause interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members! Pause the clock. Member for Scenic Rim, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr HARPER: He went on to say, 'We are seeing repeat offenders slapped on the wrist with a microwaved shallot.' There is nothing like a bit of self-reflection, member for Broadwater! What did the opposition do? I will tell members what they did. They set up a failed boot camp program. I will talk about the member for Kawana and his helicopter trips that cost taxpayers thousands of dollars only to find out, from the Auditor-General's report, that the program was a complete failure and 70 per cent reoffended. Under their breach of bail laws, 90 per cent reoffended in 12 months. It was a complete failure.

Honourable members interjected.

Ms Camm interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock. Resume your seat, please, member. Member for Whitsunday, you can join the warning list.

Mr HARPER: We saw a litany of failure, a legacy of failure, left by the very person who now runs the opposition. They achieved nothing. All of those people have now grown up. I will tell members what we have done.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Coomera, you are warned under the standing orders. Members, the level of interjection is far too high. I have warned several people. I will start to ask people to leave the chamber.

Mr HARPER: They do not like to hear the truth. The LNP left a legacy of failure. I will tell members what we have done. We have invested money. We have changed and toughened laws. Breach of bail is now an offence. Seventy-seven people have been charged with that offence since those laws were

passed—with bipartisan support, I note. We have invested in Clontarf. I have 500 young Indigenous men in those programs. I thank Minister Grace, who is acutely aware of the success of that program in keeping young people in education and making sure they get skills, training and employment at the end of it. We are investing in the street university model of the Ted Noffs Foundation. I am very proud to have received \$4.5 million to stand up that service. It should be up and running by July.

We have invested in Transition 2 Success, where we get 70 per cent of kids going back into education, skills and training. We have invested in Project Booyah. What did the LNP do with Project Booyah? It cut its funding. It cut funding to the Murri Court. It cut programs that divert kids in local community centres, such as mine in the Upper Ross, where I have \$500,000—I thank the minister for that—through an after-hours diversion program that keeps kids occupied and gets them home. They see about 60 kids per week in that program. We continue to invest in early intervention programs. At the same time we have enabled the courts, with laws passed recently to ensure community safety is paramount during sentencing. We have increased the length of—

Mr Hart: More crime.

Mr HARPER: My goodness.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Burleigh. Cease your interjections.

Mr HARPER: It is like getting hit by a wet lettuce leaf when the member for Burleigh goes for me—seriously. Is that the best they can do? If the member wants to be heard, he should stand up and make a contribution.

We continue to invest in early intervention programs. We have enabled the courts with the laws to hold violent and serious repeat offenders to account. That is what the community expects us as legislators to do. I am very proud to have restored funding to a number of programs in Townsville that see those kids find employment. They are proud to come up to me and say, 'I have a job.' At the same time, we are holding people to account and we are investing heavily in early intervention programs. The hypocrisy of LNP members to stand in this place after they cut funding to multiple programs! It is an absolute joke. They are a one-trick pony when it comes to crime. That is all they have. It is 700 days since the shadow police minister was supposed to deliver a plan. Where is it?