




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 25 October 2023

MOTION

Townsville, Youth Crime

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.25 pm): Well, that was interesting—self-promoting their brochure. I want a safe community, as does everyone in my electorate of Thuringowa. There is only one place where violent repeat offenders belong: in custody. I was pleased to read in today's *Townsville Bulletin* that after another incident that person has been refused bail.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. I will take some advice. Member, you need to clarify that the matter you are referring to is not sub judice. Again, I refer members to the advice I provided to the House about referring to matters in which there may be a charge imminently laid and the impacts statements may have on the carriage of justice. It is a matter that all members in this House should take very seriously. I ask the member to continue his contribution with those matters in mind and provide those assurances.

Mr HARPER: Thank you for your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. We introduced breach of bail. This is what the LNP did 10 years ago. They had their failed breach of bail and their failed boot camp. Under the LNP, 90 per cent of the people with breach of bail reoffended within 12 months and 70 per cent of the people who went to the youth boot camp reoffended within 12 months. It was a failed policy. We brought in breach of bail with an actual offence. We brought in other provisions whereby a declaration of a serious recidivist offender increased sentencing options by the judiciary. We know that serious recidivist offenders should not get bail.

Members have talked about police. We back our police in Townsville. I am proud to have delivered in 2018-19 a brand new police station in the Upper Ross with 10 more police. I am proud to have delivered a \$30 million commitment for the new Kirwan station that has had 14 additional officers go there. I know that the new academy in Kirwan will be another \$100 million commitment. What did the LNP do in 2020? It wanted to sell the academy. We back our police; we will not sack our police. I knew some of the officers who lost their job under the LNP, and they will not forget. What do we have? We have a shadow minister who for 1,000 days had no plan. The member, along with Phil Thompson, likes to whip up a bit of a frenzy at a rally. I refer to a media article with the headline 'Townsville residents refuse efforts to break cycle for troubled young people'. I table that article.

Tabled paper: Extract from media article, dated 10 June 2022, titled 'Townsville residents refuse efforts to break cycle for troubled young people' [1759](#).

Is that an outcome? We will continue to do everything we can. The select committee presents an opportunity to actually do something. We have a cross-party approach. It is independently chaired. I say to members of the LNP: if you are genuine and not disingenuous, let's go out there and get more things done to make our community safer. We will see exactly what happens with that.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Coomera, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr HARPER: I want to talk about achieving other things in community safety. We want to hold people to account—that is the first thing—so when it comes to sentencing I would ask the judiciary to meet community expectations. I think we all agree on that. I have worked really hard to get a street university in Townsville. I want to read this post. It is great that the members opposite have been following my Facebook. This is from Annie Sue and it is about the Street University I worked hard to deliver on top of the new police stations and on top of the additional police. She said—

My 16-year-old son and his mates go to this place every day and come home with so many positive things to say about this place. The people and the opportunities that are in front of them are all there. Truly such a valuable asset to the youth community. I truly cannot thank them enough for all they offer to young people. It may only be new, but it's already had a positive impact on my son and his mates.

I will continue to do exactly what I can in the youth space, including: additional funding for Clontarf to keep kids in education; the Stars program for girls; the Indie School just opened up in Thuringowa, which is again another asset in the youth space; the JT Academy; Silver Lining; Queensland youth services; and Community Gro in the Upper Ross, which has diversionary funding to make sure that kids stay out of trouble and get back into education, skills and training. It is about working with those NGOs and doing all we can to keep our communities safe and hold offenders to account. I will never shy away from that. I want a safe community just like everyone else in Thuringowa.