



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 19 April 2023

MOTION: YOUTH CRIME

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.24 pm): I move the following amendment—

After the word 'locations', insert—

'only after a review of programs of a similar nature already in force is conducted by the Auditor-General in the Auditor-General's current review of youth justice initiatives.'

I have spoken in this chamber on a number of occasions about the youth crime issue that is gripping this state, a youth crime epidemic that continues to this very day. We only need to scroll through today's media monitors to see what is going on in the north, in places like Townsville and Cairns. Cars are being stolen, cars are being destroyed, offenders are breaking into houses—and so it continues. The opposition has always maintained that there needs to be consequences for actions. It was the opposition that called for the reinstatement of breach of bail. We know what happened when that bill was debated during the last sittings. The government adopted the opposition's breach of bail amendment word for word. In terms of consequences for actions, we need to be realistic about what is happening at the moment—what programs are in place, what is working, what is not working and the deficiencies in the current system.

Across Queensland at the moment there are so many programs in place. By the Premier's own admission, since 2019 in excess of \$1 billion has been tipped into the youth justice space. Queenslanders have a right to now demand: what are the outcomes? What have we seen for that sort of investment? What are we seeing in terms of results for all that investment in these youth justice programs across Queensland? I think that is a fair enough question. That is what motivated the opposition writing to the Auditor-General requesting a review of youth justice initiatives, because we need a starting point. We need to know what programs are in place, what is working and what is not working. We are hearing about all of these initiatives. Only this week we have heard announcements by the youth justice minister of further funding to community groups in this space. It is fair to ascertain whether we are seeing a return on our investment, whether we are seeing a decline in youth offending in Queensland. Clearly, at the moment we are not.

Queenslanders are calling for something to be done in this space. The opposition has been very vocal about the need for early intervention programs in Queensland. I know that I cannot talk about the other part of the motion given notice of earlier today by the Katter's Australian Party. Certainly, that comes back to consequences for actions—giving our judiciary the tools they need to do their job effectively, giving the judiciary the direction and the legislation they need to deal with these issues when youth come before them and to hand out penalties which reflect community expectations. You would have to say that, to date, that has been a dismal flop and the community outrage is growing. The community anger is growing. It is only right that the community should now be demanding that something be done to address this youth crime problem which is tearing this state apart.

We need to know what works and what does not work. There is no point throwing good money after more good money and not seeing a result at the other end. On a weekly basis I am approached by community groups and organisations, as I am sure most members in this place are, promising results, outlining programs that they can deliver, asking for the opportunity to deliver services to address this issue. We need to know whether it will work, because this is taxpayers' money that we are playing with. We need to know that there is going to be value for money at the end of the day.