




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Youth Crime

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11.17 am): We know youth crime and young people at risk of offending is a complex and serious issue. Recent analysis of the number of distinct young offenders in local government areas shows that what our government has put in place is working with this statistic trending down in the majority of regions. In those areas where it is trending up, we are taking strong and considered action to combat it.

In the Strengthening Community Safety Act we introduced measures to further protect the community and tackle the behaviour of a small cohort of serious repeat offenders. As I said, overall, the number of young people offending is decreasing. It is now the lowest it has been for a decade. In fact, we have seen a 37 per cent reduction in the number of 10- to 16-year-old offenders in the past 10 years, taking into account that 17-year-olds came into the youth justice system in 2018. More recently statistics show that since 2019 the number of distinct young offenders has decreased or remained steady in more than 60 local government areas across the state: on the Sunshine Coast, down 125 offenders or 50 per cent; Mount Isa, down 40 offenders or 32 per cent; Cairns, down 56 offenders or 19 per cent; Gold Coast, down 34 offenders or 11 per cent.

In the past five years the number of young people with a proven offence has decreased from 4,338 in the year ending September 2018 to 3,315 in the year ending September 2022. That is a 23.6 per cent decrease. When accounting for population changes, the rate per 10,000 young people with a proven offence has decreased from 96.6 per 10,000 to 61.3 per 10,000 over the same period. For Mount Isa, the number of young people with a proven offence has decreased in the past five years from 138 young people for the year ending 30 September 2018 to 82 young people for the year ending 30 September 2022, a 40.6 per cent decrease.

While this is encouraging, I know it will be of little comfort to Queenslanders affected by youth crime. However, this reduction affirms the Palaszczuk government's approach under our Working Together, Changing the Story youth justice approach. It also demonstrates our significant investment of \$1.2 billion in services and programs that have been delivered across government to prevent and address offending and reoffending.

Community safety is paramount, and must be any government's first consideration. We have listened to the community, and we are taking tougher action that is targeted at the small cohort of serious repeat offenders who are committing roughly 50 per cent of youth crime. That is why, alongside legislative reforms, the government is investing an additional \$100 million in existing and new diversion and rehabilitation services. These programs and services are evidence-based and we know they will achieve results.

The highly successful joint Queensland Police Service and youth justice co-responder teams are being expanded to Mount Isa, Hervey Bay, Darling Downs, South Brisbane and Ipswich. We are investing \$18 million to expand intensive case management services which target serious repeat offenders and their families. The early action group operating in Townsville is being rolled out to Mount Isa and Cairns. We are investing \$27.6 million to continue community response and diversion services to provide after-hours support; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural mentoring; bridging to flexi school programs; and intensive case management for high-risk young people. We are also targeting extensive bail support, with a \$25.4 million to support high-risk people on bail and their families. It is already available in Brisbane north, Caboolture, Redcliffe, Gold Coast, Logan and Townsville and it will now be rolled out to Toowoomba and other locations.

We are investing a further \$4 million in our on-country programs to provide cultural rehabilitation programs to First Nations young people. We will soon be announcing the next round of community partnership innovation grants, where community solutions and place-based programs are being funded and supported.