




Speech By
Robbie Katter

MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

Record of Proceedings, 19 April 2023

MOTION: YOUTH CRIME

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (5.02 pm): I move—

That this House endorses new solutions to the youth crime crisis engulfing Queensland, including introducing relocation sentencing as an alternative to traditional juvenile detention, which would see recidivist youth offenders ordered by courts to serve long-term sentences in highly rehabilitative environments in remote locations.

While relocation sentencing is a principal policy of the KAP, it was not developed by us but was a proposal put forward to us in the course of dealing with constituents on the issue of crime. We felt this was an urgent issue to act on four or five years ago. It seems to have made its way into parliament in the last 12 months. This was a big issue five years ago when we started focusing on where we saw gaps in the system. What became apparent after discussion with police officers and magistrates was that it is difficult to get a kid, especially the biggest misbehaving kid in Mount Isa, to participate in programs. These are highly disengaged families. There are social workers coming to work in these programs in Mount Isa knocking on the front gate and saying, 'Is little Johnny here? We have a PCYC program we want him to participate in,' and they are given an expletive and told to get lost. I have literally had the mother of some of the worst behaving kids in Mount Isa say to me, 'Don't you send any more to my front fence because they do nothing to help me.' I sit back and say, 'The line I get fed from the government is that we are going to send more people to the front fence to get inside that gate.' It takes five to 10 years to form relationships with these families. If you are not going to engage the kids that way and they are not in Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, what else are you going to do? Relocation sentencing is an option.

We are always told it needs to be evidence based. Associate Professor Glenn Dawes from James Cook University prepared the report *Keeping on country: understanding and responding to crime and recidivism in remote indigenous communities*. I table that report.

Tabled paper: Report by Associate Professor Glenn Dawes, James Cook University, titled 'Keeping on Country: Doomadgee and Mornington Island, Recidivism Research Report' [514](#).

I encourage members, if you have an hour up your sleeve, to read that report. Associate Professor Dawes spent many years up in the gulf. He says that alternative sentencing is the answer. The Mareeba Shire Council took the same principle to the LGAQ conference and received 194 votes for, 11 against. Perhaps these mayors throughout Queensland know nothing about what they are talking about. Perhaps they would need evidence. The Western Australian Labor government said they needed something different. They announced \$40.4 million in last year's budget for an alternative sentencing model. All these other people think it is a really good idea, but we keep getting told it needs to be evidence based.

The other excuse we get is that you have to have staff and deliver these programs in a remote area. I am sorry this is a difficult issue. If it is too difficult for the government, go and tell the families in Mount Isa who are crying to me, sending me emails saying, 'We love Mount Isa. We had a great time here, but we cannot put up with this. We are not putting the safety of our family at risk.' It breaks my heart when I get these emails or phone calls from people saying, 'We have been here 30 years, but we

cannot live with this anymore.' I am not sure if members in this House have an appreciation of that. You really need to live with that to know the impact it is having on community. It is very hard to get people to live in these remote areas, but when we do not get help with fixing these problems it is even harder. Other endorsements for this proposal come from Keith Hamburger. He was director-general of Queensland's Corrective Services Commission for nine years. He is a strong advocate for what we are proposing in terms of alternative sentencing.

We can say with a strong degree of certainty that the sentencing happening at the moment is useless. There is 95 per cent recidivism from Cleveland Youth Detention Centre which works in perfectly with the reports that we get from the police and magistrates. Around Christmas there is a big flurry of activity because kids want to go in for safety and security. They do not see going to Cleveland Youth Detention Centre as a penalty. It is not doing its job, nor is it rehabilitating these kids. I have been to Urandangi school. It is a school, it is not a prison and it is exactly what we could be doing if you have two strict parents and a good teacher. That would cost the state nothing. You do not need to lock these kids up. One of the kids burnt down the Mount Isa Police Station, but he is a great student at the school. We are asked for evidence; I have seen evidence. You need to get out in the field to talk to these people and live this stuff to have the confidence to make these decisions. You need to deliver a consequence to these kids. For goodness sake, they need an opportunity to rehabilitate. That can only be done in a remote location.