




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 29 March 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Noosa Electorate, Youth Crime

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (7.24 pm): Noosa is horrified and deeply angered by the reported vicious assault on a young lass by three girls under 14 years old which was broadcast through social media. Our hearts go out to this lass and her family, and I thank those who have provided support to them during this time. However, I ask those who are inciting racial hatred and vilification to stop right now. Two or more wrongs do not make a right, and this is not how our community responds to trauma. Leave this matter to the police and courts. Having just debated the need for greater deterrence, intervention and early identifications in the Strengthening Community Safety Bill last sitting, in frustration I say again that what is happening is a result of our failings as a society and as MPs.

Reports were that those charged had been involved in a number of prior incidents. Why are we waiting until children are before the courts before any intervention is activated? Intervention must include prevention, and that takes identification of behaviours that there is something occurring in a young person's life such as violence or maltreatment or the potential to do harm. Even though an audit is being done by the Auditor-General on the performance of youth offender diversion programs, it may not look into when intervention should take place.

An avenue for this identification and intervention is school, yet the Respectful Relationships Education Program is not mandatory in the curriculum. We dedicate up to an hour each week in state schools for religious instruction with 60 per cent of children not attending. Does it not make sense to repurpose this time to a mandatory, whole-of-schooling life program that covers all aspects of relationships and behaviours, including that of inclusivity to encompass religions and cultures? We learnt through efforts to recycle that by introducing change behaviour at schools, children take that back into their homes. This gives opportunity to influence households that may be contributing to violence in our children and an avenue for early identification and intervention of those being abused or abusing.

We need a predictive culture across government. Earlier this month I wrote to the Public Service Commissioner about who ultimately is responsible for this. The reality is that our frontline workers have been reporting what is happening on the ground for years, whether on housing shortages or children of concern, and yet nothing was done. We need to know why. We know police, government agencies and teachers do what they can. Now we need a full analysis of what they need, where any blockages are and what everyone else can do, including us as neighbours and friends, to create greater safety for our children and our communities.