




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 24 May 2023

MOTION

Palaszczuk Labor Government; Youth Crime

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (6.01 pm): I rise to speak to the amended motion moved by the Minister for Youth Justice. Let me first say that no amount of crime is acceptable. This government will continue to target those repeat offenders who commit the majority of crimes. In fact, earlier this year we introduced tough new laws to make sure serious offenders are held to account. Let me remind those opposite that they supported it and voted for those laws. I guess it is because they have no idea, having never introduced their own legislation into this House. But I digress.

I have, and always will, advocate on behalf of my community for increased penalties and tough new laws which passed Queensland parliament just last month. Let me be crystal clear: breach of bail for young offenders did not exist as an offence under the LNP, but it does now under the Palaszczuk government. What the LNP had in place did not work. In fact, the 2013-14 annual report to the Childrens Court of Queensland said that the Newman-Crisafulli policy did not, and could not, work. In Townsville fewer than 40 young people were convicted of this offence while it was in effect—that is fewer than 20 young people on average a year—with over 90 per cent reoffending within 12 months. No wonder this useless, poorly drafted law by Queensland's worst attorney-general did not work.

Let me be clear: the laws we passed in March this year, which the LNP supported, included a real breach of bail offence. This means that for the first time this century it will be an offence for young offenders to breach bail conditions in Queensland. We are already seeing the impact of this, with more than 70 offenders charged with breach of bail under our tough laws. I am happy to compare our actions with those opposite, who have done nothing. The member for Burdekin promised that the LNP would release its plan to tackle crime 866 days ago. It was the member for Whitsunday who said, 'The numbers don't lie.' All they have released since then is three dot points, one of which is wanting gold standards for youth justice programs.

Looking at their track record when it comes to the LNP's failed boot camps, their standard was not gold. It was not silver. It was not bronze. In fact, it did not even make the qualifying round. This program had a \$16 million cost blowout, a more than 90 per cent recidivism rate and helped get donations for the LNP. It shows the LNP's ignorance when it comes to youth justice. All they want to do is throw stones. In fact, on 25 January this year the member for Currumbin complained that we got rid of their failed boot camps. We got rid of them because they were a complete rort and a failed idea. They need to come clean and tell the people of Townsville and Queensland if part of their so-called plan is to bring back this failed program.

We are tackling this issue from both ends. As the community expects, we will be tough on those repeat offenders who commit the majority of crimes and we will continue to invest in early intervention programs, which we know are making a difference. We are also investing an additional \$100 million into early intervention programs, including the announcement during the Cairns parliament sitting of

\$4 million in funding for the Youth Development Partnership Fund, which supports programs in Townsville like Project Booyah which myself, the member for Thuringowa and the member for Mundingburra are big supporters of. Unlike those opposite, we are continuing to support police and other agencies with more resources so they can target these recidivist offenders—unlike the LNP, who cut police numbers and tried to sell the Townsville Police Academy. In fact, just last week we stood up with the police minister Mark Ryan in Townsville to update the community on the future of the old 1300SMILES stadium site. The Palaszczuk government is investing \$30 million into the first stage of the facility. Construction is set to commence late next year with work expected to be completed in early 2025. Let's contrast that with those opposite and their position on this site. At the last election the LNP told the people of Townsville they wanted to turn the old Cowboys home ground into a harness racing track. As always, the LNP refused to back our Police Service with real investment. We should not be surprised, because cutting, sacking and selling is in the LNP's DNA.