




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 23 August 2023

MOTION

Vehicle Theft

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (5.37 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amendment. There is no quick fix to the issues surrounding youth justice, as we know. We know that the issue is complex. Often the young people involved come from broken families—these crimes are not restricted to Townsville or indeed to Queensland—but that is no excuse for people committing crime. No amount of crime is acceptable. I will always ensure community safety is my No. 1 priority. We will continue to tackle this issue from all angles, making sure those who do the wrong thing are caught and held to account. That is why we have reversed the presumption of bail. This is making a real difference. Young people must now prove why they should get bail and why they are not a public risk. We have expanded the number of offences with a presumption against bail. People who are passengers in stolen vehicles, commit burglary or enter a premises to commit an indictable offence will now have a presumption against bail.

Those opposite are bringing nothing to the table—we just hear crickets. In fact, they voted for our youth justice laws, which passed this House earlier in the year. They are the toughest laws in Australia and they are working. If young people are doing the wrong thing they must be held to account, and we have given the courts that exact power. I expect them to use those tools and to ensure those sentences are meeting the community's expectations.

Those opposite, and in particular the member for Currumbin, want to bring back the LNP's failed boot camps. On 25 January this year the member for Currumbin complained that we got rid of their failed boot camps. These are the same boot camps the member for Kawana established. I am happy to give those opposite a lesson on the program. It was a complete rort and a complete fail. In fact, a report from the Queensland Audit Office said—

The lack of transparency also weakened the program administration as it was clouded which party was responsible for what costs. It also ultimately leaves the process of awarding the two contracts open to accusations of favouritism, which in the absence of a clear documentation trail, cannot be readily rebutted.

A government member interjected.

Mr STEWART: Absolutely. There were also the other factors for the benefit of those opposite: there was a \$16 million cost blowout and more than a 90 per cent recidivism rate from the program. Will those opposite come clean about what their plan is? I bet members they will not because, that is right, it has been 957 days since the member for Burdekin said that the LNP would release its crime plan. Since then it has come up with three dot points and not much else. I am happy to stand here and talk about exactly what we are doing. As a government we have always said that we will look at anything we can do to reduce crime in our community. We are doing it with our nation-leading secondary engine immobiliser trial. In the two weeks since applications opened, almost 5,000 Townsville residents have applied for a \$500 engine immobiliser subsidy voucher.

Mr Head interjected.

Mr ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Callide, you are warned.

Mr STEWART: Community safety is absolutely paramount and this technology will make a real difference to people's lives, which is why we are investing in it. This week we announced the Palaszczuk government is contributing \$56 million in funding to boost infrastructure and program delivery at PCYC centres right across Queensland. These include upgrades to the Upper Ross PCYC and Palm Island as well as Mount Isa and the Burdekin. Just today we announced that a new Rapid Response Police Taskforce has been established to target serious repeat juvenile offenders. The Youth Flying Squad teams are able to saturate problem areas and, alongside local police, help foster a positive rapport with high-risk and at-risk young people. Our hardworking police officers and expert youth justice workers will solely be focusing on youth crime and will provide immediate support to local police to disrupt youth offending. We will continue to work constructively with the community and our Police Service to do all we can to tackle this issue.

No amount of crime is acceptable, so it is understandable that people are angry, and I am angry too, but we will never give up. We will continue to invest in early intervention programs like Project Booyah and Townsville Street University to tackle the root causes of youth crime. We will continue to hold those to account who commit crimes and do the wrong thing. We will continue to review what is working and what is not working. It is the Palaszczuk government that is investing \$446 million in targeting serious repeat offenders, tackling the complex causes of youth crime and investing in community safety. We will always back our communities, we will always back our police and we will always back our frontline workers to tackle the issues. We will give them what they need to do their job because that is what is expected and that is what the community demands of us.