




Speech By
Hon. Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 25 October 2023

MOTION

Townsville, Youth Crime

 **Hon. SJ STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Resources) (5.15 pm): I rise to support the amended motion. I have never been silent on how this issue affects the people of Townsville and I will always advocate for more to be done. Of course I understand the concerns people have when it comes to some of the brazen and disgusting behaviour that we have seen from a small group of people. However, the community, this government and I will never stop looking for ways to combat this issue.

I am proud to be in a government that has listened and is acting. We have reversed the presumption of bail, which is making a real difference. Senior police in Townsville have said that publicly and it is the feedback I have received. We have expanded the number of offences with a presumption against bail. Those who are passengers in stolen vehicles, commit burglary or enter a premises to commit an indictable offence will now have a presumption against bail. They must prove to the courts why they should get bail. That is an important distinction. This year, for the first time in Queensland's history, breach of bail is actually an offence for young offenders under the Bail Act. Those opposite also voted for these laws.

Let us put the facts on the table: more people are being held accountable when they break the law. That is the truth, whether those opposite like it or not. In Townsville we have seen important results from the ongoing extreme high visibility police operation, Operation Victor Unison.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members! I will start warning people.

Mr STEWART: I am advised there have been 765 people arrested on 1,352 charges in Townsville. I applaud the work that the Queensland Police Service is doing. One thing we have not seen is the LNP's so-called crime plan. It has been more than 1,000 days since the member for Burdekin and the LNP said they would have a plan around community safety.

Mr Last interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Burdekin, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr STEWART: Maybe that plan has been cut, which would explain its whereabouts. We know that they have a track record of doing that. When they were in government they cut police numbers and they cut their resources. They tried to sell the Townsville police academy.

Mr Lister interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Southern Downs, you are warned under the standing orders.

Mr STEWART: I want to know whether the LNP backs the government's plan for a police academy at the former 1300SMILES stadium site. At the last election, the LNP wanted to turn the old North Queensland Cowboys home ground into a harness racing track. The question the LNP needs to answer is whether they still want that to happen. The LNP showed its true colours when they chose horseracing over backing our Queensland Police Service. That asset, which I am proud to have advocated for alongside the members for Thuringowa and Mundingburra, is now at risk. It is the Palaszczuk government that has given continued support to the police and other agencies with more resources so that they can target recidivist offenders. It is the Palaszczuk government that is investing in Street University in Townsville.

We will always back the Queensland Police Service with new and improved resources and staff numbers. As the Police Commissioner has said, there will be a minimum of 150 extra police officers deployed to the northern region, which includes Townsville. Right now there are around 1,400 applicants in the police recruitment pipeline and nearly 600 recruits undergoing training. I am proud of how we have supported the police and invested in the service.

We know what the LNP would do for our hardworking police officers. If the LNP had their way, there would be more than 1,000 fewer police officers across the state. We all know what happens under the LNP. There will be cuts. That is what they do. It is the only plan they have. They certainly do not have a crime plan, as we have heard before. The LNP talk about gold standards. I am happy to concede that they have a gold standard in dishonesty. They are dishonest to the people of Townsville, they are dishonest to our hardworking police and they are dishonest to all of Queensland.