



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**


**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 15 February 2024

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Townsville, Community Safety**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.21 pm): I rise today to speak on the excellent work of our hardworking local police, their partner agencies in youth justice and the street uni team on what they have done to combat crime in Townsville. Sadly, in December we saw a spike in crime. Over a week, a significant number of cars were stolen and people were assaulted as a result. After meeting victims of crime, I requested immediate support from our police minister and Premier Miles to combat that increase. More has to be done, and I am determined to make change and make our community safer.

Making our communities safer is an absolute priority of the Miles government. Within four weeks of my request, and with the assistance of the Premier and the work of local police Taskforce Guardian and its partner agencies, we have seen a new police helicopter delivered for our city. This has made an immediate difference. As we heard in the House from the police minister yesterday, we have seen a 50 per cent reduction in offending. I table the front page of the *Townsville Bulletin* dated 2 February which carries the headline 'Kid crime offences halved'.

*Tabled paper:* Article from the *Townsville Bulletin*, dated 2 February 2024, titled 'Latest stats show drop in crime: Kid crime offences have halved' [208](#).

Over the last few days I have listened to the contributions of many members on the summary offences bill, particularly in relation to knife crimes and the recent tragedy we have seen in our state. Some of the LNP members, particularly the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Ninderry, are using this to try to identify a point in time at which—according to them—youth justice laws were watered down and trying to blame the government. I table an article titled 'Out-of-control kids terrorising Townsville residents'.

*Tabled paper:* Media article, dated 22 February 2013, titled 'Out-of-control kids terrorising Townsville residents' [209](#).

It states that our regional city has been turned 'into a war zone and authorities say they are powerless to stop them'. It is dated 22 February 2013, when the LNP were in power. Mr Crisafulli, the member for Broadwater, said that there was 'no denying action was needed' to address the youth crime problem in Townsville. He went on to say—

... the sad part is that it is always the same small percentage of protected species doing the damage.

What did the LNP do? They sacked 130 police, including some in Townsville whom I personally knew, they reduced funding to police training and they cut funding to the Murri Court. Then they had a failed boot camp. Then there was their failed breach of bail. Then they tried to sell our police academy. I say to the opposition: do not come in here and play politics with some point in time as a cause, because it was happening under their watch and they did nothing. The LNP failed.

We have a vehicle for change with the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee. I echo the sentiments of many who have come before us and called for a true bipartisan approach, to stop the politics. As the Premier said in his first speech, youth crime is a serious and complex issue and he cannot fix it by himself. It will take all of us to work together to enable change.