



Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**


**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 April 2024

**MOTION**

**Youth Justice Report Select Committee, Production of Amended Report**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (7.25 pm): I will follow the contribution of the member for Kawana with some facts. I asked the member for Kawana about the number of recommendations and when they came into those meetings that were extended and extended. Here is a lesson—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Comments will come through the chair.

**Mr HARPER:** The government members put in 55 of the 60 recommendations. They came in, in two hours, to the final meeting with five recommendations and we agreed with two. They came in with five and we agreed to two.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Pause the clock. Member for Ninderry, you were on a warning. You can leave the chamber.

*Whereupon the honourable member for Ninderry withdrew from the chamber at 7.26 pm.*

**Mr HARPER:** Like many members, I come to this place to make a genuine difference. I put my hand up to represent North Queensland and regional Queensland on this bipartisan committee in the hope that we would come together to listen and deliver for Queenslanders and to make our communities safer. I want to thank every single victim, every stakeholder and every community member who gave up their time and shared their stories with the committee. We heard from many Queenslanders. We heard from victims of crime. We heard from those on the front line. They all desperately want us to put aside our differences and come up with real solutions and plans to make our communities safer. I am sorry that they have all been let down by the LNP.

They have been let down by the LNP and I am furious because I put my heart and soul into this to make my community of Thuringowa safer. I am so disappointed that this committee could not come to a position that worked for all Queenslanders. People in Townsville are crying out for solutions and the LNP in this state is hell-bent on blocking the committee from taking action by hiding the report, the interim report, hundreds of pages and nearly 60 recommendations that they do not want the public to see.

I thank the secretariat and the member for Noosa, who was so tolerant in trying to get people to come together and agree. She put a lot of time and energy into the report and I would say that hundreds of hours had been put in by the secretariat, which should not be overlooked either. There were 25 meetings, 220 submissions, seven months of work and those opposite seem content to sit on their hands and hide the report. The LNP have decided that they would prefer to politicise this work than work in the best interests of Queenslanders.

They are not interested in reaching across the aisle on this matter and they were not interested from the very start. They are not interested in improving the lives of Queenslanders. They are disingenuous. They never wanted a solution. It was in their political narrative to continue their three or four slogans all the way through when we had real solutions on the table. They absolved themselves of responsibility for the victims of crime in this state. I say to the three members of the LNP and whoever their puppetmasters are: hold your heads down; hide your heads in shame. They have let down Queenslanders on one of the most important issues in this state. They have become too accustomed to blocking progress in the state.

Our work to improve community safety was to listen and deliver for Queenslanders. That work is never done. To everyone who shared their stories with us I say thank you. You will be heard. Your work is not in vain because we will make sure that report sees the light of day. I am appalled by the actions of those opposite and hope they will reflect on their behaviour and the reasons they have chosen to be servants of our state. I want to be very clear: I do not agree with all the recommendations in the report, but I certainly tried to take a bipartisan approach and reach across the aisle. That was not reciprocated. I and other government members of the committee decided that rather than having a report that reflects the nuances of the specific views of either party, it was important—in fact it was vital—that we produce an interim report for the public to consider to help to make our communities safer. That same approach was not taken by the LNP.

They have decided, rather than put their own views, ideology and political interests to one side, to prioritise themselves rather than the people of Queensland. The commitment of the members of the LNP on this issue only extends as far as their own political interests. It is all for politics, not for Queenslanders. For them, anything else is a waste of time. I know the LNP will attack me and my fellow committee members on this and I say bring it on because I have a record of standing up for my community in Thuringowa. I was the one who made sure that we got breach of bail as an offence by advocating to ministers to pass that law. I was the one who made sure that ministers got a bill to this parliament—which was agreed to—to make a declaration of serious repeat offender.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr HARPER:** Bring it on. I will take that interjection. When the LNP were in power, Sam Cox and the former member for Mundingburra, who cut and run, started a rapid action patrol hub. I did a shift with them in 2016 and they said, 'It is not working.' They only half staffed it with 20 staff. Look away now! I said, 'What do you need?' They said, 'Another 20 officers', so they got 40 in that RAP hub. I then delivered a brand new police station in the Upper Ross, which never had a police station, with 10 staff. I then increased the Kirwan Police Station police numbers from 54 to 74. Now I am delivering a brand new police precinct for Kirwan and a new academy. Why am I delivering a new academy? Because you lot wanted to sell it. That is your history. You sacked police in Townsville. You walked away from the obligations of community safety. You should put your head down, Leader of the Opposition. You are not interested in community safety.

Not only have we delivered more police for this state and given them the resources when the LNP sacked police—that is their track record; they failed on that—we now have a police helicopter in Townsville. I commend the crew who are doing an excellent job. Community members are telling me that the high-vis policing is making our community safer. The new helicopter is making our community safer.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member, I will bring you back to the motion.

**Mr HARPER:** Thank you. I was seeing how much I could get away with. I chaired the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee and spent a lot of time away from my community. I have put countless hours into the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee along with the member for Hervey Bay and the member for Cooper. We started this with an intent to drive change, to make our communities safer. We were genuine in our attempts to get those 55 recommendations—for the member for Kawana, who could not answer how many the LNP put in. From the start they were never genuine about this. It is all about politics for the LNP. Victims of crime in this state have been entirely let down by the three members on this committee who are disingenuous and who never intended to produce a report. I say: produce the report. Let the people of Queensland see what is in there because there are so many recommendations. It is such a complex issue. We attack it from so many different views—from rehabilitation, to making sure people are accountable, to prevention programs. We put so many recommendations in there and I cannot wait for the public to see the work that the government members and the chair did. From those opposite we see games and extending, never wanting to get to an end point. I am glad this motion has been moved because the people of Queensland deserve our report and they deserve a safer community.