



Speech By  
**Laura Gerber**


**MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN**

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Record of Proceedings, 14 February 2024

**MOTION**

**Miles Labor Government**

 **Mrs GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (5.26 pm): The communities of Far North Queensland have been completely forgotten by this state Labor government and nowhere more so than when it comes to crime. Last week I was in Cairns and North Queensland. Firstly, I want to thank everyone who came to the youth justice hearings that were held so that we could hear your stories, so that we could hear about the crime problems plaguing the Far North and so that we could hear about what those communities need when it comes to the youth crime crisis that is ripping through North Queensland. The LNP's outstanding candidates, Bree James and Yolonde Entsch, were there to support their communities. They were there listening to what their communities had to say. They were there supporting their communities on the youth crime crisis.

Can members guess who was noticeably absent from those hearings? Can members guess who did not turn up to support or listen to their communities? The member for Cook, the member for Barron River and the member for Cairns! They were noticeably absent. They were not there. They were not listening. What that tells us is that those members have a complete unwillingness to stand up for their communities when it comes to crime.

The Labor members should have been there because non-government stakeholders talked about how crime is out of control in the Far North. We heard about how bad the watch house crisis is getting in Cairns. We heard from Genevieve Sinclair, the CEO of Youth Empowered Towards Independence, which visits the Cairns watch house every day. She said that children are being held in the Cairns watch house in environments that health services cannot manage and that Youth Justice cannot manage. Genevieve told us that, over the past six to eight weeks, they have had workers in the watch house for four or five hours at a time when the number of children being held has reached 18. Eighteen kids have been held there for two to three weeks. That is a complete indictment on this state Labor government. Let us not forget that we have the watch house crisis because this state Labor government created a generation of young criminals and then had to override the Human Rights Act in order to hold them because they did not plan. Now they are holding them in watch houses. It is completely shameful.

On top of this, there is the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, where night mode is happening all too often, where most of the young offenders are on remand and without therapeutic intervention, and where about 96 per cent of them reoffend. Detention needs to be a place for rehabilitation. It needs to be a place to intervene in a young person's cycle of crime. But under this state Labor government it is wholly failing these kids and failing the communities of North Queensland.

Under this state Labor government, the number of serious repeat offenders in Far North Queensland has almost doubled in the space of two years—from 48 in 2019 to 81 in 2023. Since Labor came to power in 2015 and watered down our laws, we have seen: unlawful use of a motor vehicle increase by 107 per cent; unlawful entry increase by 70 per cent; robbery increase by 306 per cent; and

assaults increase by 257 per cent. This government is trying to tell us that crime is going down! It is clear from these statistics that this state Labor government has failed these communities every step of the way. It has failed the communities and failed the young offenders.

The LNP has a clear plan to keep our communities safe: increase the number of police on the beat through retention and attraction; restore consequences for action by removing the principle of detention as a last resort from the Youth Justice Act; divert young lives from crime by reforming early intervention; and fix the broken child safety system and residential care system that is leading children on a trajectory of crime. Another thing this committee heard during the inquiry is that child safety and residential care are utterly broken. The intersection of child safety and residential care with youth justice is absolutely broken, but this state Labor government refuses to acknowledge that. The government is whitewashing the data in relation to this.

If you are not prepared to acknowledge a problem, how are you going to fix it? These kids are in the care of this government. They are under child safety orders in the care of this government. The government is refusing to acknowledge that that is part of the problem. They are not turning their lives around; they are ending up in the justice system, and that is the fault of this state Labor government. There is a clear choice for the people of Barron River and Cairns: they can vote for Bree James and Yolonde Entsch in October 2024.

*(Time expired)*