




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 3 September 2019

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

North Queensland, Crime; Water Infrastructure

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.56 pm): I may be the only LNP member north of the Burnett, but I remind the member for Cairns that there are no federal Labor members north of Brisbane.

Mr Harper: This is a state parliament.

Mr LAST: Now we have a point of difference. Those opposite can sugar-coat this all they like. They can sugar-coat what this week is about and their commitment to North Queensland, but I know what the reality is for the north because I live and breathe North Queensland. I travel extensively throughout North Queensland and I talk to councils, industry groups and business owners. In fact, last night the Leader of the Opposition and I attended a crime forum in the electorate of the member for Thuringowa. He might like to say in this place that there is no crime problem in Townsville, but last night at that crime forum without exception every single person talked about the fact that crime is out of control in this city and that they are victims of crime.

This morning our leader mentioned ex-Defence Force serviceman Kim, who walks with a mobility walker and has a service dog. Last night he said something that puts this into perspective. He said that he felt safer walking down the streets of Mogadishu than he does walking down Nathan Street, Aitkenvale. That is a damning indictment on this government.

A government member: Give us a break.

Mr LAST: I hear someone from the other side say, 'Give us a break.' An ex-Defence Force member, who went overseas and put his life on the line for this country, is too afraid to go out at night unless he carries a knife because he fears for his own safety. That is the reality of what is going on in this community at the moment. They might like to say that there is no issue with crime in Townsville, but I can assure members opposite that there is a massive problem with crime in this community. Every single one of those people at the forum last night reaffirmed that they want to see a government that gets tough on crime and that is fair dinkum, particularly with youth offenders.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! We will not have quarrelling across the chamber.

Mr LAST: I turn now to one of the central platforms of my portfolio, and that is water and our commitment to establishing the Queensland Dam Company right here in Townsville. If you have water, you have opportunity. There are a lot of members on this side of the House who appreciate what it means to have water. There are members on this side representing electorates that have no water at the moment. They understand what it is like to have water. We have committed to forming the Queensland Dam Company in Townsville because we are fair dinkum about building Urannah, Nullinga and Rookwood Weir—we are not going to pussyfoot around and delay it by two years and look for excuses—and we are going to raise Burdekin Falls Dam. If you have water, you have opportunity and

you have jobs. The last dam built in this state was Paradise Dam near Bundaberg 14 years ago. That is a damning indictment. Now they are trying to drop the height of that dam by 17 metres which will turn that dam into nothing more than a puddle for that community.

We are serious about the infrastructure that this state needs and we are serious about delivering that infrastructure in North Queensland because we see the value in this end of the state. We see the value in supporting the resources sector. It is great to see the Carmichael mine finally go ahead and to see those jobs flowing through in some of the communities I represent—jobs in Moranbah, Bowen and Collinsville. All of a sudden we are now seeing housing that has been vacant for years being taken up in those communities—and hasn't that made a difference?

There are so many gaps through Central and North Queensland. There are gaps in health where we cannot attract doctors to our rural hospitals. There are gaps in teaching stock. It is a shame that the education minister stepped out. I was in Dysart last week where the principal of that school is teaching four subjects because they have a chronic teacher shortage. It is the same at Middlemount. This is the reality on the ground. I do not think there would be a single member in this place who would not put value on educating our children, yet in some of our rural and regional communities we have a massive teaching shortage. That is going to impact on our next generation, and that is a damning indictment on all of us and something that we need to look at.

(Time expired)