




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 19 February 2020

MOTION

Crime

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.23 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Toowoomba North. Townsville residents are in despair at the abject failure of this Labor government to address the crime problem that exists in their city, a crime problem that has escalated out of control over the past five years to the extent that residents are now leaving town. They are packing up their families in Townsville and they are leaving town because they no longer feel safe. That is a disgrace.

The Premier might like to say there is no crime problem in Townsville, but I assure members in this place that that statement from the Premier could not be further from the truth. Since the election of the current Labor government there have been more than 4,600 cars stolen, which is more than two a day, and there have been over 14,800 unlawful entry charges laid, which is eight every single day. The numbers do not lie. The people of Townsville have had enough.

Those opposite like to talk it up. Today the member for Cairns said in the *Cairns Post*, 'We have looked at what works with the Townsville model.' The member for Cairns will not have to spend much time looking. I can assure you that everything this government has tried in Townsville has failed miserably.

We just heard the contribution from the Minister for Youth. In the same article she says, 'You can be confident that we are going after those offenders.' I bet those crims out there are shaking in their boots. Talk is cheap. The facts are that the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre is only at 50 per cent occupancy, so clearly the government has not chased very hard at all. I challenge the minister and the member for Cairns to stand up in Townsville and tell the residents there that their current approach is working or that the government is going after these offenders.

We hear the denials, temper tantrums and misleading statements around crime in Townsville from the member for Thuringowa. I read to the chamber comments from the editor of the *Townsville Bulletin* of 20 November last year—

We have lost count of the number of times Mr Harper has written to this publication to lecture our readers about his government's record on crime. He cherrypicks statistics to show there has been progress, yet night after night our streets are targeted by thieves.

The editor gave the member for Thuringowa some sage advice—

Mr Harper, rather than spending time making up numbers and hurling insults this way, why not do the job you are paid to do and represent this community in Brisbane.

Last week I attended the Take Back Townsville crime forum to discuss this issue. The anger and frustration in that room on that night were palpable. The residents came looking for answers. What did they get from this government? They received more spin, more empty rhetoric and not a single

commitment to do anything different to what they are doing now. There was no reinstatement of breach of bail, no acknowledgement that the changes brought in by this government to the Youth Justice Act have failed miserably and no acknowledgement that the bail house program is an absolute debacle.

This Labor government is clueless when it comes to addressing crime, not only in Townsville but also right across the state of Queensland. Their soft-on-crime approach and their custody-as-a-last-resort philosophy for juvenile offenders have left Queensland reeling from the onslaught of these offenders. You can try to polish it all you like, but the fact is that today an offender who is deemed an unacceptable risk of breaching bail can still be released if being detained will have a negative effect on his or her reputation.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LAST: That's right. Section 48 of the Youth Justice Act provides our judiciary with more powers and shows more regard for an offender's reputation than it does for a victim.

In a desperate attempt to divert attention away from his failings, the member for Thuringowa chose to target the event organiser of that rally last week. What a disgrace that was from someone who has the best interests of the community at heart.

Make no mistake: we are facing the worst crime epidemic this state has ever seen. The only light at the end of the tunnel is 31 October this year because on that date Queenslanders have the opportunity to elect a government that is fair dinkum about taking on these criminals and taking back control of our state.