




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 25 May 2021

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Townsville, Youth Crime

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.25 pm): ‘We are going to have anarchy on the streets soon.’ Those are the exact words of Mr Bill McCulloch today when he called my office in desperation. I will not reveal Mr McCulloch’s age, but it is safe to say that he is a long-term resident of Townsville. He is a polite, well-spoken gentleman who is proud of the city and state he lives in. He fears for the future of that community and he is not alone. While Mr McCulloch sees possible anarchy on the streets of Townsville in the future, others see the streets resembling a computer game or, as some describe it, a war zone. What an insult to every resident in Townsville that their city is being compared to a war zone. Sadly, it is not new.

Back in 2019 when parliament sat in Townsville, a man named Kim, who served this country, said he felt safer on the streets of Mogadishu than on the streets of Townsville. Yet in the same week, the member for Thuringowa said, ‘Those people who pose a serious risk to themselves or the community will not be released on bail.’ He went on to accuse the LNP of a beat-up when it came to youth crime in the city. During that sitting of parliament, then minister for child safety, youth and women spoke of the implementation of ‘key elements of Queensland’s first youth justice strategy’ and how it was part of ‘Townsville’s best response to youth crime’.

Just a few weeks later, the son of the current member for Mundingburra said he had his house broken into and his car stolen. The member himself said, ‘We need to work with the police to catch baddies and lock them up.’

Mr WALKER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have never had my house broken into as claimed by the member.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): What is the point of order?

Mr WALKER: I take personal offence.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burdekin, did you mention the member personally?

Mr LAST: I mentioned the son of the current member for Mundingburra.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has taken personal offence and asked for it to be withdrawn. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr LAST: I withdraw. Where are we 628 days later after this parliament sat in Townsville? No doubt Kim feels like Mogadishu would be even safer compared to Townsville now. Young offenders who pose a clear threat are still receiving bail. What was touted as the city’s best response to crime has proven to be an abject failure, and the baddies the member for Mundingburra referred to are still being released as quickly as they are locked up. Right now, in Townsville we have people signing petitions calling for the sacking of the three local Labor MPs. We had residents contacting His Excellency the

Governor asking for the Palaszczuk government to be sacked. Every day my office is contacted by numerous Townsville residents who just want to be heard, yet the three Labor Townsville MPs refuse to listen.

Townsville is now descending into the Dark Ages. Cars are stopping at green lights to check for young offenders terrorising the streets in another stolen car, and families are refusing to go out after dark for fear of being yet another victim of crime.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members!

Mr LAST: They do not like to hear it, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please use correct titles.

Mr LAST: What I am saying here today is what is coming through my office. In the same week that the Townsville district chief superintendent described the Townsville police as 'stretched', we had a 16-year-old offender who broke into a house, stole a car and spat on a police officer let out on bail without a GPS tracker. Meanwhile, the member for Thuringowa talks about refurbishing a pub to increase Woolworths' profits.

The people of Townsville are sick of being prisoners in their own homes. They are sick of living in fear and they are sick of bearing the financial burden when their car is stolen or their house is broken into. They are sick of their local shopping centre being treated as some sort of amusement park for young criminals. They are sick of cars being torched on the side of the road and, most of all, they are sick of the inaction of this Labor government.

The three local members based in Townsville are mute on this issue, but I will not be silenced. I will continue to stand up in this place and be the voice for all those victims in Townsville who are calling for something to be done. Townsville residents want their city back. They want to feel safe in their homes and on the streets and, most of all, they want this crime epidemic to stop.

What we have witnessed in that community in recent weeks is nothing short of mayhem, chaos and outright dangerous behaviour. We had knives and machetes being stolen from a disposal store on the weekend. We had the recent case of 10 stolen motor vehicles simultaneously being driven around the streets of Townsville. Is it any wonder people are saying, 'Why are we seeing the chopper flying around Townsville every single day chasing these young offenders?' It needs to stop and it needs to stop now.