



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Townsville, Crime

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.26 pm): It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Stretton. The editorial headline in today's *Townsville Bulletin* says it all—'Approach to crime a shambles'. What has unfolded in Townsville in the last two days is certainly everything and more when it comes to crime and, in particular, youth crime in that city.

What we have seen from those opposite over the last two days can only be described as a thought bubble. It is an idea that they have come up with. Police officers are now going to take young offenders who are on bail fishing, to the footy and on social outings as a means of stopping them from committing crime. Is that not just an indication of how desperate this government has become to address the massive crime issue that has lingered in Townsville for three to four years?

We saw the minister stand up yesterday and say that police officers are going to be babysitting juvenile offenders. Later in the day the Premier came out and said, 'No, no, that is not quite right. It is youth justice workers who are going to be supervising these kids and taking these kids out.' The left hand is not talking to the right hand. I bet the police minister was summoned to the principal's office yesterday afternoon for that statement.

We need to look at juvenile crime in Townsville. Last night we had the incident where two girls were bashed and their house set on fire. We had the incident last week where offenders were driving a stolen motor vehicle around Townsville for two days playing hide and seek with police officers. Is it any wonder that that community has had a gut full? Is it any wonder that that community is fed up? The community is absolutely fed up with crime—houses being broken into, cars being stolen and torched, armed robberies and assaults—continuing unabated.

That raises a valid point when we look at the issue of youth justice workers. They work Monday to Friday, 8 am to 4 pm. I can tell members now that juvenile offenders do not work 8 am to 4 pm. If they were fair dinkum about supervising young offenders and getting involved to try to divert them from a life of crime then they would be working outside of the hours of 8 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday.

Ms Farmer: How dare you!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Order! Minister, direct your comments through the chair.

Mr LAST: I take the interjection from the minister. Crime does not happen between 8 am and 4 pm, Monday to Friday. If we are serious about addressing this issue, particularly in communities like Townsville, then we need to be working on a 24-hour cycle. We need to be working seven days a week, 24 hours a day to appropriately supervise them.

Ms Farmer interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bulimba, order!

Mr LAST: The minister might like to bury her head in the sand and gloss over this issue and not acknowledge that there is a problem with crime in Townsville, but I can assure this chamber that, if you go to that community and ask them what their biggest issue is, they will tell you every day of the week that it is crime. They will tell you that these juvenile offenders are getting away with blue murder and they are sick of it. There was the failed bail houses—wasn't that a disaster! Now we are seeing 'Operation Regenerate', as the minister called it. I call it 'Operation Kindergarten Cops' because our police officers should not be used as babysitters for these young offenders. Taxpayers cannot be expected to foot the bill for our police officers to babysit criminals. Police officers cannot be expected to arrest an offender one day and then take them out on a social outing the next day. Youth workers cannot be expected to make a difference when their work is tied to normal office hours.

Above all, this Labor government needs to get serious. We have had enough of the reports, the reviews, the inquiries, the thought bubbles. We have had enough of these little criminals causing chaos on our streets. We are fed up with this Labor government wasting taxpayers' money on programs and policies that do not address the issue. What we need is a government that is united in the defence of victims and united in making a real difference in a practical way. If the Premier cannot do that with the current responsible ministers then she needs to find ministers who can. We have a serious issue unfolding in North Queensland. It has been on the radar now for three years that I know of. If we do not do something soon then someone is going to be seriously injured or, heaven forbid, lose their life because of the actions of these young offenders.