




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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ADJOURNMENT

Gold Coast, Crime

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (7.23 pm): For most of us coronavirus has put our normal lives on hold, but for a number of crooks in my area of the Gold Coast they did not get the stay home message. Tonight, I want to raise the concerns of my community about the level of crime in our suburbs. It has gone unchecked and many people feel unsafe in their own homes and on their streets.

In March, after hearing stories of break-ins, stolen cars and property, and other brazen attacks across Parkwood and Arundel, I ran a community crime forum at the iconic Arundel Tavern. I do not say iconic lightly. A big shout-out to Deb and her amazing team. Their renovations are looking fantastic. I was honoured to pour the first beers when they opened again the other day.

Ironically, at the same time I was getting messages or hearing about increased crime, the Arundel Police Hub, a fantastic facility with over 100 police from our area based there, was opened. Those officers are the elite RAP squad and it does concern me to hear a number of them are currently on border duties instead of getting around our city.

Getting back to the forum, we had over 200 locals come along and share their views with senior police officers and our shadow ministers. It was important because it let our community be heard by the people who can do something about what they are going through. Much of the night was spent talking about youth crime. There is a clear sentiment that the justice system is not working, particularly when it comes to these repeat young offenders. Stories of juveniles getting caught and getting a slap on the wrist means residents feel like there is no point even reporting a crime. It means these kids will often laugh off the possibility of ever being held to account for their actions.

Most attendees filled out a survey and the top three concerns about crime were safety at home, soft punishments for young people committing crimes and locals scared to use public transport, particularly at night. The last one is a real worry because these two suburbs have light rail stage 2 right next to them. We do not want any disincentive to use our trams. Alarmingly, 77 per cent of people felt the criminal justice system is not working. People said they wanted to see more police on the ground and increased penalties.

Two very special people came along that night too, Brett and Belinda Beasley. Brett and Belinda lost their 17-year-old son, Jack, last December. He was stabbed to death outside the IGA in the middle of Surfers Paradise. These Parkwood locals have gone through hell. The immense loss happened just before Christmas and only months before what would have been Jack's 18th birthday.

The young men charged with Jacko's murder have been granted bail and that shattered the Beasleys' faith in our justice system. Brett summed it up saying, 'It's a kick in the guts, but that's the system. It absolutely sucks.'

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Pugh): Member, that is unparliamentary language and I ask you to withdraw.

Mr O'CONNOR: I withdraw. They have set up a foundation to change the culture of knife crime and to reform a system that is putting no fear in these grubs that their actions have consequences. To wrap up, we need more police on the ground, tougher penalties and a system that does not just put offenders straight back on the streets.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, you have used unparliamentary language again. Even if you are quoting, you cannot use unparliamentary language. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr O'CONNOR: I withdraw.