




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 15 July 2020

MOTION

Youth Crime

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (5.37 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the shadow minister for police. Once again, I want to bring to the attention of this parliament the experiences of people in my part of the Gold Coast as they deal with a surge in crime. That is everything from hooning—and we saw another incident along Turpin Road last week, with a P-plate vehicle crashing into a fence—to break and enters, theft, domestic violence and other assaults. I am constantly hearing the frustration of my community at the level of crime that seems to be accepted by this government.

Police openly admit to people how overstretched and under-resourced they are. They feel helpless, constantly going through the cycle of apprehending someone only to have them walk free the next day. Youth crime is a particular concern and people want something done about it. In the last month alone I have spoken to a number of locals who have been dealing with the effects of a weak government response to youth crime. One person in particular—Shane, who lives just around the corner from my office in Labrador—got in touch with me after his family home was broken into. This happened within the 40 minutes that his wife, Maria, had gone to drop their children off at school.

Four teenagers kicked in their door and stole over \$10,000 worth of their belongings. On getting back to the house, his wife noticed one of the teens standing on their nature strip. When she realised what they were trying to do, she tried to lock them in and take photographs of them. They knocked her over as they broke out of the house, and she ended up with a black eye. The police knew exactly who it was from the photos because they already had a lengthy rap sheet. Despite that, they were released within 24 hours and went on to steal from the local IGA within days. Those four were aged between 13 and 15.

Shane and his wife have had the locks changed in the whole house. They bought a safe and they now use four different keys to get in the door, but he said it is worth it to just make his family feel secure. His wife is now always on edge, especially at night. These teens might think it is all a bit of a joke, but it has left this family feeling unsafe in what Shane now describes as Fort Knox.

In another story from Arundel, my friend PJ got in touch after her house was ransacked. They had multiple smashed windows. The house was pulled apart with every drawer opened, their stuff was spread out everywhere. iPads, phones, jewellery, sunglasses and other irreplaceable items were all taken. PJ's daughter, Billie, is only young and she has been really rattled by the event, as has the rest of their family. Almost two weeks later, although the police have fingerprints nothing has been done due to the backlog of cases. Police in this case believe it could be the kids they arrested only weeks ago.

I have mentioned before the Messenger group chat I am in with local residents of one street, who are sick of some teenagers who are terrorising their neighbourhood at the back of Labrador off Freeman Street. These kids are jumping on the roof of the bus stop and abusing bus drivers. They attempted to rob a food delivery driver. They deliberately released one of the resident's birds and they have even stolen a car. There is no consideration for the residents of this area. Their intent is to keep making

trouble. Last week, further north of my area there were reports of juveniles jumping on and damaging the solar panels at a local community centre as well as a crime spree at Paradise Point. A number of youth there have been accused of terrorising local shopkeepers, even threatening one with an electronic device believed to be a taser.

Then, of course, there is the heartbreaking story of Parkwood teenager Jack Beasley. It is one I have shared before with this House and publically, but I will keep mentioning it because 'Jacko' must not be forgotten. Jack was stabbed to death in Surfers Paradise not long before Christmas last year, only months after graduating from Pacific Pines State High School. He had his whole life ahead of him. His parents, Brett and Belinda, back our changes to the law because they do not want to see any other family go through what they have. Their campaign against knife crime is inspirational, and I am proud to support them.

These crimes leave behind fear, grief and instability, let alone the loss of property; yet it seems to have no impact at all on those who commit them. These stories paint the picture of what is being experienced by my community on the Gold Coast. There is deep frustration at the lack of action and lack of consequences for offenders. The current approach is clearly not working. Our plan is tough but it gets the balance right. It gives real consequences and deterrence along with early intervention and rehabilitation, and the government should adopt it immediately.