

**YOUTH CRIME — DERBY**

*Grievance*

**MS J. FARRER (Kimberley)** [9.38 am]: I rise to speak about ongoing social issues regarding youth in Derby and direct my grievance to the Minister for Police. I acknowledge the community's frustration with the ongoing antisocial behaviour and activity felt in Derby and I am truly aware of the seriousness of the complex issues. I have been contacted by a number of concerned residents and business owners about the situation and their experiences, and I believe they make important and valid points that must be addressed by the minister.

In September 2014 I tabled in Parliament a report that was produced by my office in response to juvenile justice matters in the Kimberley. It included 19 recommendations that I urged this government to implement, which I believed would greatly improve a range of issues and reduce offending behaviour. Sadly, this government has chosen not to implement any of the recommendations I put forward.

It has been reported to me that in Derby groups of youth are walking the streets nearly every night from 10.00 pm through to 6.00 am. In recent months residents have experienced and/or witnessed youths breaking into houses and schools and throwing rocks at cars, and playing chicken on the roads at night to the point that some locals are afraid to drive at night in case they hurt someone. Community members have reported these issues to the police, and they work with agencies, but due to lack of staffing, funding and resources, local organisations are limited in what they can offer in the way of assisting to improve the situation.

Derby does have a youth facility, shire-run youth services and school holiday programs, breakfast programs, a swimming pool and a recreation centre. Derby Youth Centre is funded jointly by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and the Department of Corrective Services, but it is funded for different lengths of time by each department. This causes obvious difficulties in program planning, program delivery and staffing. It cannot operate if either of these departments decides to reduce or reallocate funding. This is a current problematic issue.

Staff also fear that through the youth reform process, there appears to be a significant move away from diversion prevention programs, which is the focus of the Derby Youth Centre. Approximately 50-plus kids attend that service each day. Staff say that they have not been provided any assurance by either of those government departments and are not clear what the centre's future will be, or whether it will exist at all. Essentially, the Derby Youth Centre staff will be doing their budget blindly as they do not know whether they will get funding, or, if they do, how much it will be, nor do they know what will be required from them under the new reform policies, which are yet to be advised.

I have spoken on types of youth matters on multiple occasions in Parliament since being elected, and I will continue to do so. Youth is an issue I am very passionate about. I believe the solution lies in investment and service delivery of diversion prevention programs and a collaboration of all levels of government to ensure funding and resource security and continuation of services.

I ask that the minister intervene in this matter, provide clarity to local service providers, including the Shire of Derby–West Kimberley, and commit long-term funding to ensure that those essential youth services continue to be delivered to Derby youth. I look forward to continuing advocacy and working with the community, agencies, departments and government to make the necessary changes essential to improving antisocial behaviour and addressing criminal acts in Derby and throughout my region.

**MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Police)** [9.43 am]: I thank the member for Kimberley for her grievance. I have had some response from police and I have some information from Hon Helen Morton about some of the services that have been provided in the Derby community. Youth crime in Derby is one of those issues that flares up from time to time. However, the most recent statistics for Derby show a reduction in a range of offences year to date, with the exception of detected drug offences. Local police in Derby have been targeting mid-level drug dealers and they have made a dent in the drug distribution market in Derby, with 375 offences being levied year to date compared with a total for the previous year of 85 offences. Methamphetamine was identified as a problem, as was cannabis, and that was believed to be driving a lot of the property theft and home dwelling burglaries. Twenty-five fewer homes have been broken into in Derby year to date, which is significant for a small community.

It is important that I talk about the initiatives in Derby in the context of the commitment of the state government and the Premier to try to reduce the Aboriginal incarceration rate. With youth, it is particularly important to put diversionary tactics in place to manage antisocial behaviour and criminal offending and try to keep them out of detention if possible. To that end, Derby police have been proactively involved with a number of other agencies. Although there is not currently an Aboriginal community liaison officer, a community relations officer or a youth crime intervention officer in Derby, the government has certainly earmarked Derby to have a youth

crime intervention officer allocated once the training of those officers is completed. The OIC at Derby said that he has noticed a gradual reduction in the levels of youth offending during school holiday periods. He attributes that to the Shire of Derby–West Kimberley’s school holiday programs. I believe those programs are effective in keeping youth engaged during those long periods in which they are not attending school. The OIC chairs the monthly Derby safe homes working group committee, which is a mechanism to bring together the Derby police, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, the Department of Housing and Anglicare to identify the at-risk families. That is determined based on agency attendance at addresses for family and domestic violence, antisocial behaviour, child welfare issues and tenancy liability issues. Since the inception of the Derby safe homes working group in 2013, over 30 new residential liquor-restricted premises have been prescribed in Derby. The importance of that is that those 30 homes now provide a stable home for many of the identified youth at risk—those who are being displaced from homes that are not safe onto the streets at night. The more of those safe houses that are liquor restricted, the better it is for communities in which there are issues with alcohol and drugs.

Derby police have also been participating in mentoring and building rapport with female youth at risk through some of the youth intervention programs. I am advised that that is through the Derby Girls Academy, with which I am not familiar, and the Shine program, which is a tremendous program. Police advise me that they regularly attend the Derby Youth Centre, and they have certainly been involved in a number of organised events through that centre. They run community barbecues in the back streets to try to interact with local youth and to build a relationship with them, and they also work to build stronger connections with the agencies to develop other initiatives that can help to combat the problems of youth crime. They also target the prolific priority offenders, who are those already in the criminal justice system. They manage those with vigorous curfew bail management, ensuring that if they have a curfew, they are in their designated place at night time and not getting up to mischief in the community.

The police prioritise their investigation of offending youth, targeting active and recidivist offenders. They certainly look for some of those first-time offenders to put through the new programs, such as the Turning Point program, to try to put in place good behaviour bonds to place youth at risk who have an antisocial behaviour profile with a mentor or a guardian in the community who can help them get back into a program of good school attendance and sleeping at night and divert them away from their offending behaviour.

The OIC of Derby police has had preliminary discussions with the Shire of Derby–West Kimberley and, in particular, with the youth centre coordinator. They will be vigorously involved with the youth crime intervention officer on the day-to-day operations of the youth centre, and the government looks forward to the placement of that YCIO in the future. The deployment of that YCIO position will help to enhance the capacity of Derby police to interact with youth and to circumvent some of the issues around youth crime in Derby. Police advise that property offences in Derby committed by juveniles, as I alluded to earlier, are driven by a desire to obtain cash to purchase cannabis and other drugs. That is one of the issues that police are dealing with up there, which is why they have been targeting those mid-level drug dealers.

The other area that the government has put some effort into is improving the capacity of the mental health and drug service centre at Derby Hospital. I think \$1.8 million was put into that centre to ensure the provision of good programs to divert people away from alcohol and drugs. The Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service also operates to ensure we can get to those people who need our support to divert them away from crime.