

**NICK DAMETTO**  
Member for Hinchinbrook

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Townsville crime crisis risks civil unrest on streets

HINCHINBROOK MP Nick Dametto fears civil unrest will break out on Townsville's streets between criminals and law-abiding citizens unless the State's political leaders and heads of government agencies bring crime back under control.

The Katter's Australian Party MP is calling for an urgent tri-partisan "Youth Crime Action Meeting" in order to stop the endless "spree of home invasions, assaults and thefts" being perpetrated by criminals.

"Yesterday, we had a diabolical situation in Townsville where the city was effectively placed into lockdown as a gang of thieves sped around in stolen vehicles. The situation was so bad that we had six flights either diverted from or disrupted at Townsville Airport due to the police calling on the use of the Townsville-based rescue helicopter to track the offenders in commercial airspace. When we have persons carjacking for joyrides and threatening others with syringes, this should be enough evidence to show we aren't dealing with a first time offender anymore," he said.

"The people of Townsville have had a gutful of criminals who continue to prey on the innocent and ruin their lives and livelihoods. These hardened criminals have zero regard for public safety and human life. It's time for the State Labor Government to admit their law enforcement policies are not working, put aside political differences and work with the KAP and other parties in trying to find a fix urgently before Townsville descends further into chaos. The solution is much like the problem - way bigger than petty politics."

Other community leaders and government agencies would also be asked to participate in the meeting with a firm plan of action to be implemented immediately after.

"I can't say I have all the answers but I do firmly believe that the KAP's Relocation Sentencing policy should be adopted to remove these hardened young criminals out of the existing youth justice system," Mr Dametto said.

"This plan would see juveniles spend their time of incarceration in a harsh, remote location designed to break down and retrain such offenders. It's time to also revisit mandatory sentencing for adults where property crime is concerned. I would support a "three strikes and you're out policy". I'm all for rehabilitation but let me tell you something, if you've been caught stealing a car or committing property crime a third time, then obviously the message isn't getting through.

"It has also been suggested to me the relocation and retraining of whole family units may need to be considered if we are ever going to break the intergenerational crime cycle."

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Mr Dametto feared a situation where the driver of a stolen vehicle kills an unsuspecting bystander or that fed up residents could soon take matters into their own hands against criminals resulting in "serious injury or worse".

"As a victim of property crime myself, I share the anger residents have with what is going on in our region. People are at their wits' end dealing with this rubbish that is caused by a few. Residents have told me they do not feel safe on the streets, let alone in their own homes. Right now, tensions are at boiling point and it would not take much to set off this powderkeg, the likes of which we have not seen since Western Australia's Kalgoorlie riots in 2016.

"The police are doing all they can but they are hamstrung by the weak penalties of our justice system which effectively gives criminals a slap on the wrist. We need to get on top of this problem as quickly as possible."

In a stirring speech to parliament last week, Mr Dametto said he feared North Queenslanders were now living in a "gangsters' paradise".

The MP shared a deeply personal account of his mother being held at knifepoint at a service station some years ago as an example of the long-lasting impact crime can have on victims.

"My mother lost 12 months of her life because of the stress that put on her," he said.

"These people are out there taking that away from people. They do not deserve to be out there. If we do not come down hard on crime, all we are creating is a gangsters' paradise for the perpetrators."

According to the Queensland Government Statistician's Office Crime Report, there were more than 240,000 reported property offences in Queensland during 2017-18.

Mr Dametto said he would be writing to Townsville's three sitting MPs, government leaders and the heads of relevant governments agencies asking them to join forces on tackling crime.

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