

Hillside

Breaking the cycle of juvenile crime

PARENTS of young people convicted of crimes should be held responsible for their children's behaviour, George Christensen (Dawson, Qld) has told federal parliament.

Mr Christensen said there is a clear link between parenting and rising levels of youth crime, which is causing widespread concern in his far-north Queensland electorate.

"Residents I spoke to at my community forum in Wulguru were concerned about the escalating crime rate," he said.

"They live in fear of the next break-in and feel nothing can be done to stop young offenders."

Mr Christensen said similar concerns were raised by Townsville residents, some of whom advocated for parents to be fined if their children commit a criminal offence.

He said it was possible for the suggestion to be carried out under Queensland law.

"Under Queensland's Youth Justice Act 1992, orders can be made against a parent," he said.

"According to the act, when a child is found guilty of a personal or property offence, 'it is reasonable that the parent should be ordered to pay compensation for the offence'.

"It also states: 'The court may decide to call on a parent of the child to show cause, as directed by the court, why the parent should not pay the compensation.'

"If parents are unable or unwilling to pay – and this is something new that I suggest to the Queensland government – then an ability for a court to order the parents to take an intensive parent training course and counselling sessions with their juvenile offending child should be incorporated in the act."

Mr Christensen said he believed such actions could help to break the cycle of juvenile crime. •



PARENTAL GUIDANCE RECOMMENDED: *Sheeting home responsibility for crimes*

The price of Eureka!

A MOTION to protect science and research funding has passed the House of Representatives.

Adam Bandt (Melbourne, Vic) moved the motion calling on the federal government to guarantee research funding would not face cuts.

"Research is an investment, not a cost," Mr Bandt said. "If we treat research in this country as a funding tap that can be turned on and off, then the benefits will not grow and our best and brightest will not stay."

The opposition supported the motion, with Kelly O'Dwyer (Higgins, Vic) saying Australia needs to stay at the forefront of science and medicine.

"Without medical research, we would not have such lifesaving innovations as penicillin, first used as a medicine by the Australian Nobel Laureate Howard Walter Florey," Ms O'Dwyer said.

However Alan Griffin (Bruce, Vic) defended the government's record on research funding, pointing to large increases in funding for universities since 2008.

"There will always be more that can be done in this area," Mr Griffin said. "But I think we also have to acknowledge what has been done and what is being done." •

Whistleblowers praised

CAMPAIGNERS who lobbied for the establishment of the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse have been commended during debate in the House of Representatives.

Sharon Grierson (Newcastle, NSW) praised the whistleblowers, the victims who spoke out about their experiences and the investigative journalists for their pivotal role in bringing about the commission.

"Much of what has come to light has done so as a result of victims speaking out – whistleblowers – and through

the diligent investigative reporting at local media outlets of people like Joanne McCarthy at the *Newcastle Herald*," Ms Grierson said.

"The Prime Minister has said that the royal commission will change the nation. I hope so. And she has said that the *Herald's* campaign got into her head, saying that we have an obligation to shine a light on what has happened in the past.

"Whistleblowers such as Detective Chief Inspector Peter Fox are also to be acknowledged for speaking out about these issues on a national level when it

was not in the interests of his career. For that I thank him," she said.

"We have heard of heartbreaking victim suicides and of families left behind. We all cared; we were all concerned.

"The suicide of John Pirona, thought to be the 12th person to have taken his life after being abused by a priest in the Hunter, was a critical moment in this sad saga.

"His family and the community, and many others with similar experiences, said 'Enough is enough'. I thank them for their strength." •