



There needs to be a crackdown on teen thugs running riot in Surfers Paradise, according to key city leaders. Picture: Richard Gosling

Crime and Court

Push for tougher penalties for teenage thugs in wake of one-punch attack and bus robbery

Jessica Elder and Lea Emery, Gold Coast Bulletin

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YOUNG thugs who commit crimes should be put in home detention with ankle monitors, says one of Australia's leading child psychologists.

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg said the unusual punishment was "worth a try" because nothing else was working or getting through to teen street gangs.

Politicians, youth workers and Gold Coast traders yesterday lifted the lid on a

culture of anti-social behaviour, offending and vulnerability.

Their plea for urgent action comes after a bus driver was allegedly bashed by 16-year-old and as 21-year-old one-punch victim fights for his life in hospital. Three youths, aged 14 to 16, have been charged in relation to his injuries.

COWARD PUNCH VICTIM STILL IN COMA

Any night of the week kids as young as 12 are congregating on the streets of Surfers Paradise.

Should teens loitering in Surfers Paradise face a curfew?

Yes

No

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Police who walk the beat, bar owners and traders have long rallied for a 12am curfew for under 18s in the Drink Safe Precinct, law the state government said it was unlikely to enforce.

Dr Carr-Gregg said there had been an increase of unsupervised young people on the streets.

“Many of these young people believe there are no consequences for their actions,” he said.

“It’s something that comes from their upbringing. If your child doesn’t have limits and boundaries when they are little, how can you expect them to have them when they hit 14?”

“I would love to see a trial of home detention, where these kids are forced out of these environments.

“I don’t know if it would work, but what we are doing now isn’t, so we may as well try it.”

Detective Acting Inspector Greg Aubort said the teenagers roaming the streets would eventually become an offender or a victim.

“There are two different kinds (of teenagers),” he said. “Some are hanging around pushing social boundaries, but some are looking to commit crimes.



📷 A wild brawl erupts in Surfers Paradise. Footage: Gold Coast City Council

“Police patrolling Surfers Paradise look out for these kids and do have the powers to move them out of the precinct and we do use those powers.

“A percentage of the kids are coming down from the Logan area on public transport. Surfers Paradise is an attractive place, it’s where they want to be.”

Child Protection Investigation Unit boss, Detective Senior Sergeant Troy Penrose said his officers tried to get to the bottom of juvenile offending.

“If a child commits an offence, we try to look at why they’re offending,” he said. “It raises a lot of complexities.

“Often them assaulting someone in the mall is secondary to other issues in their lives.”

Surfers Paradise MP John-Paul Langbroek said the rise in juvenile crime was part of the Labor government’s “soft” approach.

“There are no long-term consequences for what has happened,” he said.

“They will never be named publicly and we are not going to hear what has happened (because of laws protecting juveniles).”

However, Queensland Law Society president Christine Smyth said locking juveniles up was not the answer.

“Putting them in jail does not lessen their criminality — it often makes them worse,” she said.

Ms Smyth said often these children did not have a parental figure.

She said the most important thing was ensuring the youth justice system was well resourced so police and the courts could help the teenagers as much as possible.

Mayor Tom Tate said the Gold Coast community had absolutely no tolerance for teen violence or one-punch attacks.

“As Mayor, I am rolling out additional CCTV cameras across the city to support our hard-working police,” he said.

“I will raise the issue of street violence at the next Mayoral Safer Suburbs forum.”

A spokeswoman for Acting Attorney-General Stirling Hinchliffe said a blanket curfew on Surfers Paradise was unlikely.

“A youth curfew that applies to all young people could, however, have the undesired effect of drawing more young people into the youth justice system,” she said.



📷 Cavill Mall has become a gathering place for teens late at night - prompting concerns about safety.
