



Speech by

**Mr ALLAN GRICE, OAM**

**MEMBER FOR BROADWATER**

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Hansard 21 October 1998

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Committee (Cognate Debate)**

**Estimates Committee B**

**Report**

**Mr GRICE** (Broadwater—NPA) (4.08 p.m.) First of all, I thank the committee members. The committee functioned as a group of parliamentarians should function, no doubt led by the warm, quiet, dulcet and encouraging tones of the chairman, the member for Bulimba! To correct something that was said by the member for Springwood—nowhere have I mentioned in this case or any other that Hansard was wrong. I suggest that, if the member consults with the chairman, he will find out what happened.

I take this opportunity to welcome the projections that an extra 809 police and 571 civilians will be provided by August 1999 as a direct result of the programs that were put in place by the former Borbidge Government. Equally, I applaud the Budget Estimates which indicate that there will be an extra 317 police this year, again as a direct result of the policies of the former Borbidge Government. Those projections are a direct result of the foresight of the former Government, and particularly the former Police Minister, Russell Cooper.

This year's additional police have not materialised from thin air since the minority Beattie Government scraped together just over three months ago; rather, these police will be delivered this year because they are already in training. They were put in training through the Police Academy under a coalition Government. Nothing the current Minister has done has had anything to do with the extra police expected on our streets during the year. Beyond that, it then becomes this Minister's responsibility. Indeed, these extra police recruits have not only been the result of the coalition's commitment to increasing police numbers; the bulk of these recruits will be processed through an entirely new police academy designed, funded and built by the former Government—a police academy that members of the current Government were so vehemently opposed to.

Insofar as police strength and funding is concerned, this year's Budget papers basically regurgitated the achievements of the former Borbidge Government. Should this Government get an opportunity to deliver a further Budget—and the likelihood of that is decreasing by the day—it will be interesting to see what sort of funding and projections it will be making when it has to stand on its own two feet and put in place its own strategies and priorities.

Despite this Government's professed commitment to being a Government for all Queenslanders, it has not gone unnoticed that residents in seats held by coalition parties have been singled out for retribution. During the Estimates committee hearing, the Minister was forced to concede that of the 12 Police Beat programs not a single one would be located in a coalition-held seat. So much for being a Government for all Queenslanders! Of the 12 additional Police Beat programs, nine will be located in Labor Party seats and the other three will be located in seats that One Nation narrowly won off Labor only four months ago. It is apparent that Ros Kelly's whiteboard has materialised within the office of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services. It is an indictment on this Government that it puts its own political needs ahead of the very real crime protection needs of the community at large.

On the issue of representation, I should point out that I was disappointed that not a single member of the newest party in this Chamber—the One Nation Party—bothered to partake in the Estimates committee process for Police and Corrective Services. There are several members in the One

Nation Party who have extensive police histories—and I mean that in a positive sense—who could have contributed enormously to the scrutiny of the Police and Corrective Services budget, but they did not. The leader of the party did breeze in and sit at the back of the room before leaving, but that was the extent of the contribution.

However, of even greater concern to the community was the Minister's use of the Estimates committee to outline his plans to introduce more lenient parole guidelines. It was ironic that he chose to make such an announcement on the same day that he criticised the cost of recapturing prison escapee Brendon Abbott. It seems to have escaped the Minister's notice that the community does not want one cent spared when it comes to the recapture of such evil people. However, the Minister's feigned concern about the cost of prison escapees was exposed when he was asked for a breakdown of the cost of prison escapes in the period between 1989 and 1996.

The one procedural matter to which I took exception, and in respect of which I took the option of making a comment at the end of the statement, concerned a question that was put in the right spirit to the Minister. It was not a trick question. It was a question that the committee unanimously agreed that the Minister should have taken, and this was discussed by the all-party committee. The decision of the Minister not to take that question runs counter to the interests of open and accountable government.

Time expired.

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