



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 6 August 1998

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Crime Commission

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.32 a.m.), by leave: On the front page of today's Courier-Mail there is a claim that the Queensland Crime Commission seeks a 50% funding boost to \$4.6m so that it can fight paedophilia and organised crime over the next year. While the deliberations of the Cabinet Budget Review Committee remain confidential, I can confirm that the commission has sought an increase of more than 50% in its budget for the 1998-99 financial year.

As honourable members will recall, I opposed—and the Opposition opposed—the creation of the Crime Commission in its present structure for two important reasons. First, I believed that the establishment of a stand-alone Crime Commission diminished the role and authority of the Criminal Justice Commission, which has withstood the twin tests of time and politics and, therefore, warranted more resources, not fewer. Second—and this is the crux of the issue—I believed that the establishment of the Crime Commission would lead to unnecessary duplication of administrative staff and, therefore, unnecessary costs.

The submission to the Cabinet Budget Review Committee for extra funding confirms my worst fears. In its first year of operation the Crime Commission had an allocated budget of \$1m. But this had reached \$1.35m by the end of the year. Much of the increase was needed to cover higher than expected establishment costs—some may say one-off costs—such as motor vehicles, computers, office equipment, furniture and a security system. There is some suggestion that staff are being paid very high salaries. But in the second year, and with the establishment expenses already met, the commission says that its operating costs will be higher still.

For the benefit of honourable members, I can reveal that the current operating budget for the commission for the 1998-99 financial year is \$3m a year. But the commission is seeking a further \$1.6m—an increase of more than 53% on the funds allocated in the final Budget of the Borbidge/Sheldon Government. I am advised by Treasury that the previous Government indicated that the budget would be \$3m and that would be it. I find it an extraordinary request for such a large increase, considering the fact that the previous Government's Budget was only presented to this Parliament in May. The previous Government said that the total budget for the Crime Commission was going to be \$3m and no more, which seemed to me to be very fair. As I said, Treasury has confirmed that advice to me, and I agree with the previous Government.

Before I am denounced by honourable members opposite and editorial writers, let me reassure this House that I am firmly committed to the fight against crime and all its manifestations, especially paedophilia and organised crime. As a father, I am particularly determined that the fight against paedophilia will be unrelenting. I am about catching crooks, not about analysing them. My concern is that we seem to have all these crime-fighting organisations basically given overlapping responsibilities to fight organised crime and paedophilia. What we need are bodies that actively tackle crime, not talk about it. Taxpayers' money should not be wasted on bureaucracy; it should be spent on catching criminals—money going into investigations, not bureaucracy. What we have at the moment is a Criminal Justice Commission, the Crime Commission, the Parliamentary Commissioner, the Children's Commissioner and the police. We even have the Federal Police involved in some of these matters. I am concerned that these crime-fighting agencies occasionally announce that they are going to investigate matters just to put pressure on Governments to allocate funds—pressure on both sides of

politics. No doubt the Courier-Mail and other organisations will be put in that position again, as they have been in the past.

Mr Borbidge: It's not new.

Mr BEATTIE: Of course it is not new. The member faced the same pressure. We are getting it again. I am saying that enough is enough. Let us get this money into investigations instead of bureaucracy. Yet they rarely deliver with people in the dock charged with an offence. I want people in the dock charged with offences, not simply more bureaucracy.

I put these organisations on notice today. The taxpayers of Queensland have had enough of their talk of new investigations and cracking down on organised crime or paedophilia. We want results. I will not play any role in diminishing the powers of the CJC or behaving in a way which is detrimental to these investigations. But as the Premier of a Government committed to disciplined financial management, I will not tolerate any waste of taxpayers' money. Every dollar that goes into bureaucracy in these organisations is money not spent in schools or in hospitals. I therefore give this pledge. The Cabinet Budget Review Committee will weigh up the community benefit and the cost before making its final decision on the request by the Crime Commission for extra funding, and we will not be pressured by media reports which suggest that it deserves additional funding when that cannot be substantiated.
