



Speech by

Mr RUSSELL COOPER

MEMBER FOR CROWS NEST

Hansard 4 August 1998

MR E. R. RAMSAMY; LAW AND ORDER

Mr COOPER (Crows Nest—NPA) (7.09 p.m.): I endorse the remarks of the member for Mackay in relation to Ram Chandra. I am sure that other members on this side of the House would feel the same.

Government members interjected.

Mr COOPER: Are members having fun? They should continue chatting amongst themselves.

I rise in defence of the people in the law and order system of this State who will come under attack. We have already seen a portent of what we can expect in relation to the various initiatives that we undertook, whether they be crime prevention partnerships, school-based constables, the Proactive Support Group, or the PIN—Proactive Intelligence Network—initiative. All of those initiatives were set up for a reason, namely, to enhance security and safety in the prison system and Police Service.

The Minister's approach is to try to destroy, bring down, denigrate and knock those initiatives so that he can replace them with something else that he knows will be far less effective. I want to make sure that the initiatives that we put in place for very definite reasons stay in place. This Minister has a lot to thank us for. His department has had huge budgets and increased police numbers. There have been improvements with respect to police powers and responsibilities and many other initiatives. Following the Mengler review into drugs in jails, certain recommendations were made, one of which was for a Proactive Intelligence Network. Previously, intelligence was always reactive. The CSIU has always done the reactive work. This was the first time ever in the Queensland prison system that we had a proactive intelligence system. It is starting to work, and that is why we are starting to see drugs being found in the prison system. If that system is allowed to continue, it will continue to prove effective.

I pay tribute to Detective Inspector Kev Roberts, who heads up that group. That was one of the main initiatives of the Mengler inquiry, as well as the Proactive Support Group under Greg Howden, who was previously the manager of Arthur Gorrie. He dropped that job and took on the PSG job, which is equivalent to the PSRT in the Police Service. Twenty of the best officers—the cream of the crop—in the prison system were put in place to provide the security and training that the prison system needs.

The Hummers are a part of that safety initiative and will be used to patrol the perimeters of seven of the secure prisons. They were introduced for a very good reason. Even if the Minister thinks of nothing else, he should think of the people who have to drive those vehicles and prevent escapes when they occur. We saw the phenomenon of people using high-powered centre-fire rifles from outside the prison walls. That has never before been seen in this State or nation. We have responded to make sure that the perimeter can be kept secure and that prison officers and the community can be kept safe. The Minister should welcome those initiatives, because they represent a massive improvement to the prison system.

I wish also to mention the police powers and responsibilities that we were able to put in place to enable the police to do their job more effectively. Again, that was something that both sides of the House had been wanting. The police had sought those powers since 1982, but that was implemented only in February of last year. That took a long time. Both sides of politics were tardy. That should never have been the case. All we did was bring the Queensland Police Service up to speed with—and maybe a little better than—the other jurisdictions around the Commonwealth.

We were able to give the police the move-on power and the power to deal with hoons, which has made an enormous difference and given people peace and quiet. The power to detain, the power to move on, as I mentioned, and all of the other various powers are giving the police the necessary tools to do the job that we have wanted them to do. All I am saying is: make sure that the increased police numbers, powers and enhanced security in our prison system and the Police Service stay in place. We brought this State to the cutting edge with respect to crime prevention through the CPPs. The Minister should not let those programs be knocked; he should let them grow, continue and be enhanced. We were set to expand those programs. They were put into about eight places in the State, and we want to see them stay there.

Time expired.
