



Speech by

Hon. TOM BARTON

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Police Numbers

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: I rise to inform honourable members of the Beattie Labor Government's plans to put more police on the streets of Queensland and to outline our performance to date. Labor's commitment is one of which any Government could rightly be proud.

In the first year alone, the Beattie Labor Government will deliver 317 extra police to cities, towns and rural communities right throughout Queensland. Those are extra police. If 300 officers leave the Queensland Police Service through retirement or otherwise, we will train 617. If 400 leave, we will train 717. I mention that they are extra police, because I will not play the games of the former Government, which frequently claimed that new police were in fact extra police. It is high time that we brought some honesty and clarity into the debate on police numbers. Law and order auctions do no-one any good, least of all the electorate.

Under a Labor Government there will be enough police. We will make sure that there are enough police. Before we came to Government, we sat down and thought honestly and responsibly about the policing needs of the people of Queensland, away from the usual political hysteria which too often attaches itself to this issue. We considered such factors as how many police are likely to leave in the coming seven years. We looked at projected population growth over that time using ABS figures. We considered the existing training capacities of both academies as well as the capacity of the Queensland Police Service to handle the training requirements of first-year constables. Those opposite may say, "But that was our commitment, too", but the fact is that they did not deliver. Labor will deliver. We will deliver where the coalition has only ever talked about what might have been. All of this does not mean that I will not continue to come into this place from time to time to report on Labor's achievements with respect to police numbers. I will be doing that again in October and December, again in April next year and again in August next year.

I would now like to take a moment to compare Labor's plans for the next two years with the performance of those opposite in the first two years of their Government. In the first full year of the coalition Government, Queensland received just 160 extra police. Labor's first year will see 317 extra police—twice as many as the coalition delivered. In the second year of a Beattie Labor Government we will deliver Queenslanders 387 new, extra, additional police. In the coalition's second year of Government police numbers grew by just 268, or less than 70% of what Labor will deliver in the year 1999-2000. The fact is that Labor has chosen to fund 317 extra police for the coming year, whereas the coalition chose to provide funding for just 160 in the first year of its Government. The fact is that Labor has chosen to fund 317 extra police, because that is how many Queensland needs.

The graduates are already streaming out of the academies. One hundred and seventy-one have graduated in the last month alone—135 from Brisbane and 36 from Townsville. Those officers have been assigned to stations right throughout Queensland. The Cairns policing district received five; Townsville, 14; Mount Isa, five; Gladstone, four—

Mr Cooper interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Crows Nest will withdraw those remarks.

Mr COOPER: I withdraw.

Mr BARTON: Rockhampton received eight; Bundaberg, five; Gympie, five; Maryborough, five; Redcliffe, 15; Sunshine Coast, 10; Toowoomba, five; Gold Coast, 19; Logan, 18; Metropolitan North, 26; and Metropolitan South, 27. The increases do not stop there. In October this year a further 22 "retreads" will graduate from the Oxley Police Academy. They are experienced police from interstate and overseas. In December this year there will be 10 more graduates for the far-northern region, five for the northern region, 10 for Mackay, five for Rockhampton and 90 for south-east Queensland. In addition, in recent weeks 12 experienced officers have been assigned to the Ipswich policing district. Also, a further 10 graduates will go to Ipswich from the December graduation.

This Government has recognised the needs in Ipswich and moved quickly to begin to address the problems left for us by the previous Government in that area. Upon coming to Government we also found problems in Cairns. Again, the Government has moved quickly to correct coalition neglect. Twelve experienced police have been transferred to the Cairns policing district. The number of vacancies in the Cairns and Ipswich policing districts points to the lack of commitment by the previous Government to fixing up problems as they emerged.

Labor came to Government with a strong commitment to more police on the beat, a vast expansion of community policing initiatives, additional basic equipment for prison officers and police, as well as an increase in the number of prison officers, which we are also already delivering. We are already well on the way to fulfilling our election commitments on police issues.
