



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE

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INCREASE IN CRIME

Mr FELDMAN (Caboolture—ONP) (6.31 p.m.): As a former police officer, it is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the Government amendment. I do not want the Government to go all misty-eyed and think that somehow I have had a change of life and reverted to my Irish Catholic worker battler blind Labor supporting youth, because that could not be further from the truth. But, as the Minister knows, I will give credit where credit is due. I will not back down from a good fight when one is presented to me, and if the need exists to tip the bucket, then I will tip it.

On behalf of my constituents in the Caboolture electorate I say that I have found the Minister to be most ready to assist with struggling police numbers in this city—and Caboolture is a city—which is struggling with increased population, retarded infrastructure, a burgeoning youth populous and schools at bursting point. In fact, at the Community Cabinet meeting in February of this year the Minister reacted to the depressed police numbers and the additional workload and placed an additional five police, full time, at the Caboolture Police Station. He also heard my cry on behalf of the Bribie Island community and reacted to that call by placing an additional police officer there and also by allowing for a police officer, part time, from the Caboolture Police Station to run the Bribie Island station as a 24-hour police station from Thursday through to Sunday.

Criminals, however, are desperate people. Police numbers will deter them from engaging in their activities but will never stop them completely. Caboolture found this out. Increased juvenile crime brought another cry from the heart of this community. After another call from me, the Minister did not stop and let things rest. At the drop of a hat, in an off-the-cuff visit to the understaffed Caboolture Police Station, with senior QPS staff in tow, the Minister reacted even further to the broadening community concern. He met with me and a range of community leaders from Caboolture and the Morayfield CBD. He listened to their concerns, allayed their fears and reacted to their needs. That is the point: he reacted to their needs and added another five police to this station. This is indeed the sign of a Police Minister who is listening to his community, and I thank the Minister.

I worked as a police officer in our community for over 12 years and I know the pressure and the strain that police are under, especially when the population swells as it has done in Caboolture. That district's population swelled from some 25,000 in 1987 to over 100,000 in 1998. It is hard to keep the lid on crime with an increase in population such as that. Also, the Minister should not forget my call for a PLO for the indigenous community at Caboolture. I will probably speak to the Minister about that further.

Many more police stations need their numbers increased. I see that Gatton has two extra uniformed police as well as a further plain-clothes police officer. Hervey Bay needs another couple as well. We know that the police are under pressure from a lot of things. One of them relates to recreation leave, but this problem is about to end. Leave has been rectified to cope with the time pressures of the 2000 Olympics and the celebrations of the new millennium. It is good to see a Police Service prepared in case something happens in relation to Y2K at the turn of the millennium.

I know that the shadow Police Minister highlighted an increase in crime and I know that certain crimes have increased, but sometimes there is just no accounting for the trend. One can make all sorts of magical assumptions about crime figures and statistics. We have heard some here tonight. For example, even I can say that armed robbery has increased, but I also note that illegal possession of

firearms has gone down. From the statistics provided by the QPS, there were more armed robberies than illegal possessions of firearms, so it would appear that the old adage is true: outlaw firearms and only outlaws will have them. Right now, as we speak, somewhere in this Queensland community there is a police officer, a hardworking copper, taking a crime report numbered somewhere in the vicinity of 99/347,000. He is doing that not because he has to but because he knows that without him being out there more crime would be committed.

This Government is now showing that it is prepared to be tough on crime and tough on criminals—maybe not as tough as One Nation would like it to be, but I think Labor is indeed progressing down the right track. We recently debated and reinstated the ability of police to arrest juveniles under the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act and the new watch-house facility built in Brisbane, with the in-built technology and protection devices to protect police from unscrupulous and vexatious complaints. The Minister should keep looking after the police. That is one thing they love: being looked after.

This Government has shown a consistent attack on some of the root causes of crime with the proposed introduction of drugs courts. This will be attacking the addiction of these drugs at the grassroots. I am glad that the Government is not going down the ridiculous path of the soft option of shooting galleries. My only recent fear is in relation to the liberalisation of prostitution. That will be debated later.

Time expired.
