



Speech by

**MIKE REYNOLDS**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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Hansard 4 March 1999

**POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr REYNOLDS** (Townsville—ALP) (2.44 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I speak today to the Police Powers and Responsibilities Amendment Bill 1998. In terms of the objective of the legislation, it has been indicated that the Bill will seek to amend section 35 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 1997. The objective of the amendment is to reinstate the power of arrest for children, for offences against the Traffic Act 1949 and section 120 of the Act, in existence prior to the commencement of the Act. We have heard the assurance from the Minister that this Bill does not increase the power of arrest for children but only brings them into line with those provided prior to the commencement of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act. That has been indicated by a number of other speakers today, as well.

This amendment Bill is here because of technical changes that are required due to a deficiency in the 1997 legislation. As the Minister indicated, the section was originally drafted on the basis of legal advice to the effect that section 20 of the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 provided a power of arrest for a child. However, it became apparent that this section of the Juvenile Justice Act 1992 does not provide a power of arrest but merely preserves or confirms existing arrest powers provided to police officers by other Acts while also conditioning the use of those powers. Effectively, those deficiencies mean that a child cannot presently be arrested for offences provided under the Traffic Act 1949, such as drink-driving, or for offences against section 120 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 1997.

This amendment is an important one for the Queensland community. It is an important one for the police officers of this State who work on a day-to-day basis in this community, as well. But what must be said is that it is one particular area of response. And while there are many options—and I would like to explore some of those options today—other than arrest for children, there is a need to arrest children in certain circumstances. I do not think that any member would deny that there are many areas in regard to juvenile justice where a child does commit a crime and an arrest is necessary in that regard. Indeed, this Bill plugs that technical change that is required due to the deficiency in that 1997 legislation.

The amendment is necessary to bring children within the scope of section 35 of the Act for the purposes of arrest without warrant. I indicate that, in line with looking at this Bill today, there is also very much a need to emphasise the direction that the Beattie Government is taking in regard to crime prevention. When we are looking at crime prevention, we should be very much aware of the work that the Crime Prevention Task Force has been doing right throughout the length and breadth of Queensland.

I was very pleased, in my capacity as the Premier's representative in north Queensland, to take part in three meetings of that Crime Prevention Task Force in my home City of Townsville/Thuringowa and in Rockhampton and Gladstone, as well. I was very pleased with the numbers of members of the community who attended that task force in a very positive way, not only looking at a hard-core law and order approach—similar to what we have heard from the member for Caboolture today—but also looking very much with a great degree of concern at how we can prevent crime—crime against property and crime against the person—and looking very realistically at the programs that can be run at a community level to ensure that we have the lowest possible levels of crime.

When I was at those Crime Prevention Task Force meetings, I was reminded that this State spends something like \$1.2 billion a year on providing for police, on providing for corrective services and on providing for the court system. When one looks at that \$1.2 billion a year—I would hate to think by

how much some members of the One Nation Party, and particularly the member for Caboolture, would like to see that figure rise and by how much they would like to see State taxes rise in order to bring in some of the measures that the party would like to bring in. One can only wonder at how much that \$1.2 billion that we spend now would increase in terms of our budgetary component on a yearly basis.

When attending the Crime Prevention Task Force meetings, I appreciated that the emphasis is very much on prevention. It is based on the policy that we took to the last election of not only looking at how to combat crime through increased police numbers, building more prisons or having greater deterrents or punishments, but also looking at the causes of crime to ensure that, at the end of the day, fewer crimes are actually occurring. As we heard in the House last night, sometimes one almost feels that Queensland is ahead of the rest of the Australian States in terms of crime statistics, but the fact of the matter is that we are not. The Queensland police force, our court system and our corrective services system have done very well. Indeed, a comparison of the statistics shows that we are not as far ahead of the other States as some members of the One Nation Party and some members of the conservative parties would have us think. Causes of crime include issues such as a lack of literacy and numeracy, a lack of an educational background, homelessness, alcoholism and child abuse. Those social and economic factors have a real role to play in combating crime. The Premier's Crime Prevention Task Force has recognised that if we can identify those particular socioeconomic circumstances and place them within a crime prevention strategy, that will go a long way to combat crime in the State of Queensland.

I was also very pleased with the partnership process that crime prevention strategies can adopt. The crime prevention strategy that will be adopted by the State of Queensland will recognise the role of local government—a role that was not recognised during the seventies and the eighties. Only in the 1990s have individual local authorities throughout Queensland, and indeed throughout Australia, recognised the purposeful and positive roles that they can play, with State Governments and communities, in the prevention of crime.

The Townsville City Council has taken a lead in crime prevention strategies. Indeed, a standing committee of the council examines those particular matters. I commend the Townsville City Council and the Thuringowa City Council for the work that they are doing in crime prevention. Both councils have dedicated officers who are working with the community and the State Government to tackle crime in our communities. That is a positive and proactive approach to prevent crime at that community level. A number of those partnerships have been very successful in Townsville, such as the Safety House program, the Neighbourhood Watch program and a range of other programs. The Crime Prevention Task Force will take that extra step to look at the role that the State Government, local governments and communities can play in developing a purposeful strategy to combat crime.

I conclude by congratulating the Police Minister on some of his initiatives for the City of Townsville. I am very pleased with the early advent of two police beats in Townsville. That move identifies community areas where the implementation of a police beat can enhance very positively crime prevention strategies. The first police beat has been established in South Townsville, where the police officers, who are based in the old police house in Palmer Street, are working with the Townsville City Council and local businesspeople to combat crime in their area. That will go a long way to ensuring that South Townsville has enhanced crime prevention.

Last Wednesday, the Minister came to Townsville to open the police beat at Garbutt, which was a grand occasion for the suburb. I take this opportunity to congratulate the people who worked with the State Government to establish that police beat. I particularly refer to the Garbutt Neighbourhood House which, during the term of three Governments—the Goss Government, the Borbidge Government and the Beattie Government—campaigns long and hard for that police beat. That campaign went on for four years. I congratulate Sandra Haig, the vice president of the Garbutt Neighbourhood House, on the excellent work that she did in campaigning for that police beat. The business community, those who have been affected by crime and the people of Garbutt themselves have also campaigned for the police beat, as has the Townsville City Council. I thank the Minister sincerely for that police beat. Two other police beats are to be opened in the Townsville/Thuringowa area and they will go a long way in the partnership process that is necessary in the prevention of crime.

As I indicated, this is a technical change that is required due to deficiency in the 1997 legislation. I commend the amendment Bill to the Parliament.

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