



Speech by

Hon. TOM BARTON

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Police Resources

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.47 a.m.), by leave: When the Beattie Labor Government came to power, we said that we were committed to giving the Queensland Police Service the resources and support necessary to take it well into the 21st century. We promised to tackle crime head on with a comprehensive program to direct resources into the many areas that contribute to building a safer community. The Beattie Labor Government is delivering on these promises and already we can see some big results, particularly in the area of police numbers.

From a historical perspective, until Labor came to power in 1989, the Queensland Police Service was saddled with one of the poorest levels of State Government funding in Australia. Once in Government, Labor significantly increased police numbers—by a record 1,089, in fact—and we delivered resources to police and capital expenditure on new police stations.

Recently, the Queensland Police Service had cause to celebrate an historical milestone. For the first time in its history, there are now more than 7,000 officers serving across the State. This places the service in great stead to achieve its 30 June 1999 target of 7,132 officers across the State. The even bigger news is that forward estimates indicate that we will overshoot this target by around 40 officers. This includes those officers who will graduate from the Oxley and Townsville academies over the next few weeks. As I said, these numbers represent an historical achievement for policing in Queensland and an increase in police numbers not seen since the early days of the Goss Labor Government.

More than ever, my personal commitment and the commitment of the Beattie Labor Government to bolstering police numbers and getting our police out on the streets is firm. This Government has given an undertaking to the people of Queensland that we will lift police numbers to 9,100 by the year 2005. This is a 30% increase in police and will be achieved through the recruitment and training of around 600 recruits each year to 2005 and will result in an average increase of 325 officers a year.

Police numbers in this State will receive another significant boost next month when 147 recruits commence training at the Oxley Police Academy and 40 commence training at the academy in Townsville. This month another 20 officers with prior policing experience, called retreads, commenced training at the Oxley academy, taking the number of new recruits to 207. That is more than one-third of our yearly intake and is among the largest intakes of police recruits on record. People are clamouring to join, with police receiving 3,000 applications a year.

The recruits are joining the QPS at a time when those in other States are losing officers at alarming rates. I draw the attention of members to an article in the Sunday Age which shows that Victorian police numbers will drop by almost 300 in the next 18 months. Poor old Jeff Kennett! He may have got the grand prix, but he could not muster enough police to carry out RBTs over Easter because all spare police officers were escorting the Vietnamese Prime Minister's visit. Jeff Kennett's woes are good news for Queensland, because Victorian police are applying for jobs here. Victorian police realise that there are greater promotional chances here and more resources to do their job, along with a better lifestyle.

Ensuring that police numbers continue to grow at record rates and the building of new and replacement facilities continue to be a major priority for the Beattie Labor Government. As I said, we are

already ahead on the promised police numbers and we will continue to push graduates through the academies to meet our commitment year after year. Over the next few years, members and the public will see a marked improvement in police numbers and police presence on the streets.
