



Speech by

Hon. TOM BARTON

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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PERFORMANCE OF MINISTERS

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (6.25 p.m.): If that is the best shot that those opposite can come up with, I feel sorry for them, because it is best described in the words of the previous speaker, Neil Turner: it is like being flailed with a wet lettuce leaf. If those opposite think that we are not putting up a better performance than they did when they were in office, they have not been around for the last 10 months.

Let us look at some of the achievements that this Government has made in regard to prisons and the Police Service. With regard to the Police Service, we went to the public with a promise that we would enhance community policing by putting Police Beats into place. We are putting in 12 this financial year. A number of those Police Beats are already open. The 12 Police Beats will be at Trinity Beach, Rasmussen, Kelso, South Townsville, Garbutt, Slade Point, Kallangur, Bray Park, Eagleby, Urangan, Riverview and Redcliffe. Those opposite are jealous because they were not capable of doing this. The local communities love these Police Beats.

This Government is putting in six shopfronts at Garden City, Springwood, Capalaba, Booval, Woodridge and Redcliffe. A further four will be put in in the next financial year. Those shopfronts have been promised and financed. Shoppers and supermarket owners love them and want more of them. I am even being approached by Opposition members for Police Beats and shopfronts.

We are putting in additional police stations that were not budgeted for by the coalition. The new police stations will be at Gracemere, Beerwah—where the land has been purchased—and Morningside.

We have run 33 forums around the State in relation to the Crime Prevention Task Force. The public and community interest bodies are lapping it up because they know that it is simply not good enough to respond to crime; it is necessary to do something positive about it. Opposition members are turning up to those forums and they are appreciative of what is being done because of the comments made to them by people in their electorates.

I wish to refer to police numbers. This Government promised 317 additional police this year. On current trends, we are going to deliver approximately 40 more than that. In its last year of office the coalition promised an extra 239 police officers. I believe the coalition actually provided a few more than that. If those opposite want to draw comparisons with what we are delivering in relation to police numbers, I can inform them that we are delivering far bigger increases in police numbers and they are already on the ground. Those police are already improving the clear-up rates. That is why the numbers of prison cells are being increased. This Government has budgeted more for the Police Service than the coalition did for this financial year.

In Corrective Services we made up the shortfalls. We put \$1m into the basic equipment needs. The prisons have Hummers which are useless and which the prisons did not want. Correction officers did not have flak jackets which enabled them to go to perimeter incidents. They did not have two-way radios. They did not have camera surveillance that worked. This Government has provided all of those things.

Not only are we training hundreds of additional prison officers for the expansion that is going to occur; we have also put on an extra 50 and they are already in place in the prisons. This has been successful because the prisons are now far more secure. We are moving drugs out of the prisons at a massive rate.

We have stopped the sell-off of Arthur Gorrie and Borallon and the privatisation of Rockhampton. We have provided an increase of \$8m for the prisons budget over and above what was budgeted for by the coalition. The General Manager's Drug Task Force has already achieved more than 160 significant drug busts in prisons this financial year. We have put in six sniffer dogs and we are putting in a further six. We also have five drug detection machines on order.

We have completed the restructuring of prisons. I can tell the shadow Minister that I get my hands on the levers at midnight on Friday night and, boy, am I looking forward to it. I want to make sure that the prison system is even more effective than it is now.

This Government is committed to providing 900 additional cells in prisons.

Mr Horan: You'll pull the levers and they'll walk out the doors.

Mr BARTON: I'll take the interjection. Quite frankly, during the last 12 months when the coalition was in Government, 53 people escaped from prisons, including 13 high-security prisoners, one of whom was Brendon Abbott who ran up more air miles and got more frequent flyer points than Mal Colston did in the same period of time. During the time that this Government has been in office, only 23 prisoners have escaped and they have all been walkaways from open custody facilities. That matter has been explained in this place and I am not going to go into it any further.

As I said, this Government is committed to providing 900 additional cells. The shadow Minister is jealous of this because the coalition had planned to provide 600 additional cells. The shadow Minister has been out saying, "We should not have put it in Maryborough." Now he wants to kill Woodford.

Time expired.
