



Speech by

**Hon. TOM BARTON**

**MEMBER FOR WATERFORD**

---

Hansard 26 May 1999

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Special Services by Police**

**Hon. T. A. BARTON** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: The State Opposition has attempted to run a scare campaign about privatising police services. This is a ridiculous assertion and nothing is further from the truth. It was sparked by misunderstandings between Redcliffe police, the local council and the chamber of commerce regarding the use of police on special services—a practice that has been used for decades.

The Redcliffe City Council had asked the local police if an officer could be dedicated to carry out patrols in the CBD on Friday and Saturday nights. This was to be above and beyond the normal patrols carried out by police. The local police explained that regular patrols of the CBD were being carried out but could not guarantee that an officer could be kept there permanently as the officer may be called away on other jobs from time to time. Local police explained that if the council wanted a permanent officer who could work at the discretion of the council, then an officer could be hired on special services in that officer's off-duty time.

Special services have been carried out by police in their spare time and the fee charged goes directly to the officer carrying out these services. In the past, special services have been provided for road transport escorts, security at special events and at roadworks. In fact, police have been employed by shopping centres during peak periods such as Christmas to carry out extra patrols. It is not a new event, as the member for Toowoomba South attempted to assert yesterday in the House. His Government allowed the practice, too. For instance, under the coalition, police were employed by shopping centres such as the one at Indooroopilly to carry out extra patrols. Was this an attempt by the Borbidge/Sheldon Government to privatise the Police Service? It is a laughable assertion and the member for Toowoomba South should know better.

It is clear that having a police officer carrying out extra patrols at Redcliffe's central shopping area is no different from the practice of having special services provided for shopping centres during peak times. It usually occurs where police provide services that are outside their normal duties or when extra duties are required by outside agencies. If the Redcliffe council does not want to employ an off-duty police officer to carry out extra patrols, its alternative is to employ a security guard as other councils around the State currently do.

The use of special services is not a de facto move to privatise police and it is mischievous of the State Opposition to misrepresent the use of special services, because it was a common practice under successive coalition Governments. In fact, the use of special services in the north coast region—which includes Redcliffe—is substantially lower this financial year, with 497 instances until mid May 1998-99 compared with the last financial year under the coalition with 579 instances.

I would like to put the use of special services in some historical perspective. It first became an issue during the Fitzgerald inquiry in the late 1980s when Tony Fitzgerald found that some officers were using special services to supplement their meagre wages and the lax rules for special services had the potential to allow abuse of the system. That was the legacy of 32 years of coalition Governments. Police were so poorly paid that they had to use special services to make ends meet. Under the Goss Labor Government, we tightened the rules regarding special services and increased the fees to \$50 an hour. More importantly, we increased the basic wage for police from one of the worst in Australia to one of the best, so police no longer have to rely on the money earned for special services.

To put this whole incident in perspective— and I know it is one that Mr Speaker has a keen interest in—I point out that the local police have been working with the community to tackle a recent outbreak of property crime in Redcliffe. In his role as the member for Redcliffe, the Speaker raised the issue with me and the local police. The police were able to implement a number of initiatives that are aimed at reducing crime.

In conjunction with these initiatives, the Government has funded a Police Beat at Margate and a police shopfront at Kippa Ring as part of the highly successful Police Beat program. The police initiatives have already made some progress with police apprehending an offender during a break and enter at a Redcliffe firm. That offender has been charged with numerous offences perpetrated earlier this year. That is what can be achieved when local communities and councils work with police.

However, this incident about special services also shows what happens when a little bit of misinformation is twisted for purely political purposes. The Government is not going to privatise the Police Service and any suggestion along those lines is ludicrous.

---