



Speech by

Hon. TOM BARTON

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Hansard 27 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee B
Report**

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (3.16 p.m.): I have a very good news story to talk about with regard to the Police and Corrective Services budget. Frankly, what we have seen in this area is record budgets. The Police budget has increased by 4%. The recurrent funding budget for Corrective Services has increased by 19.7%. We are seeing a continuation this year of the massive increase in police numbers that was achieved in the first year of the Beattie Labor Government, unlike all the rhetoric that was there during the time the coalition was in Government that did not lead to a substantial increase in numbers. We are also making sure that those increases are being applied at the cutting edge—out there in the regions, out there in the police operational areas—they are not going into the cute, touchy feely areas; they are going out there where police are needed: on the job.

We have also seen the capital works budget continue in Police. We are seeing continuations of additional police shopfronts. We will also manage to find funding for some additional Police Beats out there—genuine community policing at its best. That was abandoned while the coalition was in Government, but we have picked the ball back up again and we are taking it out there and scoring tries.

We are also seeing a continuation of what we started last year in the very proactive problem oriented policing measures—genuine partnerships between the community and the police. The shadow Minister talks about the regions. I will just briefly take him through the percentages—not all the figures; he can read the document again for himself, which clearly he has not done up till now. In Far-North Queensland, there is an additional 10.5%; North Queensland, plus 6.1%; Central Queensland, plus 6.7%; North Coast, plus 16.2%; Metropolitan North, plus 8.8%; Metropolitan South, plus 10.8%; and South-East Region, plus 10.6%. We are putting the resources out there in the regions where the public want to see the policing improved. We are also putting out there the massive increase in police numbers, which will also continue during this financial year.

In prisons we have committed to an additional 900 cells over and above those that are already constructed, plus the 400 cell replacement facility at Rockhampton. The prisons budget this year is \$117.8m for capital works. The shadow Minister spoke about the capital works budget not being achieved. What he was told—and what he fails to understand—is that until 1 May the prisons in the State were controlled by an independent commission over which I had no effective control. That is why he and his party supported my putting a department in place.

We are taking measures to deal with drugs in prisons. We have major financial initiatives in this budget to carry on the good fight. We went out there and did something about getting the drugs out of prisons. When I became the Minister, the average urinalysis figures were over 20%. They are currently 8%. They have been down as low as 4%. We are putting in massive initiatives to drive the drugs out of Queensland's prisons. That is continuing this year.

There was nothing obscure about what I put to the Budget Estimates committee. This shadow Minister cannot understand the documentation—if he has read it. He cannot understand straightforward answers to his questions, because he is insisting on misrepresenting the position. Let us consider the assets tax. Perhaps it will have the impact that the shadow Minister says it will have. However, that

relates to next year's budget. These are the Estimates for this financial year, not next year. It is about time he understood that, because he cannot understand simple mathematical facts.

He wants to talk about the output measures. Those targets are a range. In any sense, that means much higher clear-up rates, because we have an increasing population in this State. Even if the percentage stays exactly the same, it will still represent a big increase in the clearing up of crime in this State. The shadow Minister seems to have a fixation with guns when he wants information that is not readily available.

With regard to police seconded to the CJC, I will make this Parliament well aware that I would like them back, but it is not within my power to tear them back from the CJC. That is part of this coalition's continued attack on the very existence of the CJC, which it hates, because it does not believe the CJC worked in its interest. The CJC has the habit of keeping the coalition honest.

With regard to capital works in prisons, the shadow Minister says that the Minister borrowed money. Yes, I did. I am proud I did. The alternative was the coalition's alternative: sell prisons by a fire sale to the private operators and privatise the prison system in this State.

Time expired.
