



Speech by

Hon. TOM BARTON

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Police Beat Program

Hon. T. A. BARTON (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.52 a.m.), by leave: I rise with pleasure this morning to tell this House of some of the achievements of the Beattie Labor Government in the area of community policing. Prior to the last election, the then Labor Opposition made a commitment to provide funding for an additional 10 Police Beats in cities, towns and suburbs right across Queensland. The former Police Minister, the honourable member for Crows Nest, also promised the Queensland electorate an expansion of the Police Beat program. However, the difference between the promise by the coalition and Labor's promise was that the Beattie Labor Government came up with the cash.

On coming to Government I was surprised to find virtually no money in the coalition's budget for delivery on that commitment. The former Minister, in a desperate bid to hold on to Government—and perhaps belatedly realising the benefits of Police Beats to local communities—rashly and hurriedly promised Police Beats all over Queensland. And yet the Budget that had been framed just two months prior to the last State election had funding for just two Police Beats. Labor promised 10 Police Beats, but will deliver 12. Unlike the former Minister, Labor retained a commitment to community Police Beats dating from their introduction in 1993 under the former Labor Government. Police Beats worked then, and they work now. And the coalition failed to appreciate that fact.

The Police Beat concept allows us to combine the best of modern technology with the effectiveness of community-based policing from years past. A modern-day Police Beat officer is like the country cop of yesteryear. Most Police Beat officers live in a suburban house, in a suburban street and walk the beat in a designated area extending from that house. One Police Beat, however, will operate out of commercial premises and another out of a former police station. A Police Beat officer's house differs from every other in the street in just one way: it is a fully functioning police station, with complete computer access to the Queensland Police Service mainframe computer.

Police Beat officers become familiar with the local community, because they are members of the local community and participate in local community life. Local communities are embracing community Police Beats. Only last weekend, when I was in Townsville for Community Cabinet, members of the local community formed a delegation to thank this Government for the two newly opened Police Beats in that city.

We promised 10 community Police Beats in this Government's term. By 30 June, less than 12 months after gaining Government, Labor will have delivered 12. As a result of Labor's commitment to community policing, Police Beats will be a regular feature of daily community life in Trinity Beach in Cairns; Garbutt in Townsville; South Townsville; Kelso in Townsville; Rasmussen in Townsville; Eagleby; Riverview; Bray Park; Kallangur; Margate; Urangan; and Slade Point in Mackay. The beats at Garbutt, South Townsville and Trinity Beach are already up and running. The Kelso, Riverview and Rasmussen beats will be opened shortly. Other ministerial commitments permitting, I expect to officiate at the openings of the beats at Slade Point, Bray Park, Kallangur, Urangan, Margate and Eagleby during the months of May and June.

I am proud to belong to a Government that has made such an unambiguous commitment to the Queensland electorate and then delivered.
