



Speech by

WARREN PITT

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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INCREASE IN CRIME

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (6.21 p.m.): I rise to second the amendment moved by the Minister. Nowhere is the Government's law and order focus more evident than in far-north Queensland. Central to any Government's responsibility to ensure community safety is the provision of appropriate numbers of police. As the facts presented to this House by the Police Minister tonight attest, the Beattie Labor Government has hit the ground running in that regard.

The former coalition Government talked a lot about increasing police numbers, and the member opposite claims that the large numbers of police appearing in places such as Cairns, Edmonton and Mossman under the Beattie Government are the result of planning by the former coalition Government. Planning is all very well—credit where it is due. Indeed, the former Government had excellent plans—so good, in fact, that we adopted them lock, stock and barrel. But the primary difference between this Government and the coalition is that this Government has delivered, and delivered in spades. It has turned plans into reality.

Police numbers in the Cairns Police District have increased by a whopping 17% since Labor came to office and 14.3% in the region overall. Over this same period, police numbers Statewide have increased by 5.74%—an excellent achievement for a Government that has been in office for only 17 months. As a proud representative of the far north, I make no apologies for the fact that the Cairns Police District, which extends right up to the cape, has received more than three times the percentage increase in police numbers.

Mr Purcell: Well done! Well represented!

Mr PITT: I thank the member.

Law and order is about more than police officers. Keeping our communities safe requires a careful mix of police officers and facilities, including police stations, new technology, civilian support and crime prevention initiatives. The Beattie Labor Government is pursuing all of these, and I am proud to say that one shining example of this Government's action focused approach to law and order is in the township of Edmonton. It is part of the fast developing southern Cairns corridor. When the coalition left office, there were just six police officers in Edmonton. Today there are 10 officers—almost double in just 17 months. Those police are there on the ground. It is good to have those extra police, but these historic increases in police numbers create a need for new police stations. Again, the Beattie Labor Government has delivered for the people of Edmonton and the people of Cairns.

Following up on a pre-election commitment to build a 24-hour police station in Edmonton, this year's budget allowed an allocation of \$1m for the commencement and substantial construction of the new facility. There are 10 officers in Edmonton now. When the new station is completed, the numbers are likely to double to 20. I have sought and gained assurances from the Minister for Police that numbers at the Gordonvale station will not be affected when the new station at Edmonton is up and running. These assurances were not available from the Borbidge/Sheldon Government, and a new 24-hour police station was talked about for years. The coalition promised and promised and promised, but failed to deliver. It was left to the Beattie Labor Government to deliver on that score.

The Opposition sought tonight to talk about crime statistics. Indeed, there have been some unfortunate rises. It is important, however, to look at the nature of those increases. For example, while

the rise in rape may seem alarming, it has to be interpreted cautiously. In many cases, large fluctuations in the number of rape offences can be directly attributed to a large number of charges being brought against single offenders for incidents occurring over a number of years. One example of this is in the Innisfail district, where about 28 additional offences have been reported. Twenty-five of these were old offences—many years old—with 10 attributed to one offender and 15 to another.

The Opposition's scaremongering is irresponsible. While more has to be done to tackle these assaults and unlawful entry cases, it is pleasing to note that 20 of the 25 major crime categories are still below 1996-97 levels—an encouraging sign that this Government is on the right track. However, the Queensland Police Service is not only attacking crime head on, but through crime prevention measures it is also attacking the causes of crime. Some of these initiatives are based on world leading research and trials of strategies to combat break and enter offences.

Part of this process has been the trial of a break and enter reduction project, which involves police who will conduct a home security assessment soon after a break and enter crime is reported. Under this project, the householder will also receive a kit outlining ways to prevent the crime from happening again by securing points of entry, marking property, installing alarm systems and other measures. In addition, neighbours in the immediate vicinity are alerted to the break and enter and advised to take precautions. Police patrols are also increased in the areas where burglaries have taken place.

This direct approach has been prompted by statistics which show that in Queensland people have a one in twelve chance of being a victim of a residential break and enter crime. However, once they become a victim, their chance of becoming a victim again doubles to a one in six chance, which proves the theory that when it comes to crime lightning often strikes twice.

Time expired.
