



Speech by

Mr W. BAUMANN

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard 1 March 2000

POLICE STAFFING, ALBERT ELECTORATE

Mr BAUMANN (Albert—NPA) (11.18 p.m.): Last week Mrs Cheryl Cockin presented me with a petition requesting that the Police Minister urgently take action to ensure that Coomera Police Station is manned 24 hours a day and that planning be put in place to provide a new full-time police station in the Helensvale area. This petition, addressed to the Police Minister, Mr Barton, has been signed by more than 2,900 people, most of whom reside in and around Helensvale.

The need for an increased police presence in the southern Albert region has never been more urgent. Mrs Cockin organised this petition when she discovered, to her dismay, that the region does not have adequate police coverage. Indeed, the local police station at Coomera is closed in the evenings and on weekends, resulting in the unsatisfactory situation of residents being forced to rely on police at Broadbeach—some 24 kilometres away—to respond to their local needs.

Mrs Cockin took it upon herself to canvass the community and gain support for this petition and was overwhelmed by the response from her fellow citizens. As this petition is not in the correct form to be presented to the House, I seek leave to table it along with various supporting newspaper clippings which Mrs Cockin has provided.

Leave granted.

Mr BAUMANN: These relate to escalating crime and loutish behaviour in the area and include the following items: car hoons speeding through the streets on the night before rubbish collection, grabbing bins and sending rubbish flying all over the streets; hoons and youth gangs terrorising residents at Ormeau with police apparently stating that there were not enough officers available to attend; and the Deputy Mayor advising that hooliganism, vandalism and antisocial behaviour are major concerns in the area.

The Minister may recall that I appealed to him 12 months ago for a school-based police presence at Helensvale State High School. It is fairly obvious that that would be a good move if it could be organised. Just last week, two residents who were too frightened to give their names for fear of retribution, made a citizens' arrest when an arsonist set fire to a playground shade structure in one of Helensvale's parks where the skate bowl is situated. I understand that the police took something like 40 minutes to attend because they had to come from Broadbeach.

I seek leave to incorporate Mrs Cockin's letter in my address.

Leave granted.

13th February 2000

To: The Honourable, The Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland

CC. The Hon. Mr Tom Barton

Presented to Parliament by: Mr W F Baumann

I would like to draw to your attention the worsening crime problem that has been escalating rapidly in the Northern Gold Coast area for a number of years. It is the lack of police facilities in one of Australia's largest rapidly expanding areas.

The area in question is from Pimpama (N), Gaven Way (S), Hope Island (E) and Mt Tamborine (W). This is a huge area and the population is growing fast. These are some of the facts—

Coomera police station is the only police station in the area and operates between the hours of 8am till 4pm, Monday to Friday.

There is one police car that services this huge area after 4pm and is shared fortnightly with Runaway Bay.

The annual growth rate is around 14% per annum (1998 figures) for the Coomera division.

The number of proposed residential and commercial developments is increasing.

All this development along with the already existing spread of population means that the police resources are stretched even further. A call out to hooners speeding down streets in Pimpama at the same time as an assault in Helensvale results in one of these incidents having an unacceptable response time. If the patrol car is busy it may be hours before assistance arrives, by then it is over and the perpetrators are long gone.

This is a scenario repeated to me time and time again by the residents and police officers I have spoken to over the past 4 weeks whilst compiling the enclosed petition. The police are frustrated, the residents are frustrated and the business owners and operators are frustrated.

This unfortunately, is not something that will go away.

Thankfully, there is now a 24hr fire station at Helensvale and approval for a 24hr ambulance station at Oxenford to service this growing part of the world. Unfortunately, the police service, despite their efforts have had no success in getting funding for extra services.

Broadbeach is the only police station covering the whole Gold Coast after 4pm and if you are lucky enough to be able to get through by telephone an apathetic but sympathetic response is all you can expect. The police have not got the manpower to handle all the enquiries. Broadbeach police station is approximately 24kms away from Coomera, so any incidents that occur where your presence is required, means having to travel to Broadbeach.

A re-occurring theme in conversation with businesses and residents is 'there is no point in ringing the police because nothing will be done'. This is a sad state of affairs, as the population should not have to feel this way.

All the petition asks for is a 24hr, manned police station at Coomera, offering assistance to local residents and businesses when it's needed. It will allow the police to speed up their response times and maybe stamp out the loutish and criminal behaviour we are increasingly living with.

The residents and businesses have noticed the lack of coverage after hours and so have the criminals.

I could have spent months, collecting thousands upon thousands of signatures but the situation needs your urgent attention. The 2900+ signatures collected were done in only 3 weeks but any delay would only make our plight even worse.

I sincerely hope you take notice of my letter and petition and look into some extra funding for our region. I am not a politician or a councillor or affiliated with any protest groups. I am a concerned resident and mother of two children that feels strongly about being able to live in a trouble free and safe environment. If this cannot be, then all I ask is to have a local police presence that can respond to any problem quickly.

Yours faithfully

Cheryl Cockin

Mr BAUMANN: Residents have reached the point of not even bothering to call police because, in many cases, they believe that nothing will be done. This is no reflection on the Queensland Police Service.

There is a real concern, though, about morale in the service, given the undoubted frustration of dedicated officers trying to deliver assistance to meet community expectations. At the same time, community members are trying to assist through groups such as Neighbourhood Watch, community consultative committees and safe houses. I am sure that the Minister is well aware of those organisations. One cannot blame the people for feeling that their efforts are wasted when police resources are insufficient to provide the essential back-up.

The 2,900-plus local people who signed this petition wonder why it is that politicians and bureaucrats seem to ignore the fact that theirs is the fastest-growing area in Queensland, with around 14% growth last year. They cannot understand why they are neglected when, with sensible infrastructure planning and adequate and timely provision of services and resources, their security and safety problems could largely be prevented.

The Minister might argue that manning levels are adequate, but I can assure him that they are not. When one takes into account annual leave, sick leave, secondments, work-related injuries, workplace training, special leave and the demands of the many major events on the Gold Coast—Indy, Schoolies, surf-lifesaving titles and myriad national and international sporting events—it is not difficult to understand the impossible task facing senior staff responsible for rostering enough police to meet demand.

I would also like to bring to the Minister's attention the value of motorcycle patrols as a very efficient method of increasing police effectiveness, particularly in known trouble spots. These low-cost,

high-profile machines certainly raise the perceived level of police presence in any community or region, and their manoeuvrability and flexibility make them a far more efficient machine than the more expensive cars and four-wheel drive vehicles in a wide cross-section of demand usage. I urge the Minister to support the calls for more of these machines on the streets, and particularly in the streets in my electorate. I ask the Minister to seriously consider the depth of feeling in my community about this issue.

Time expired.
