



Speech by

Mr BRUCE LAMING

MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

Hansard 18 October 2000

POLICE RESOURCES, MOOLOOLAH ELECTORATE

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (11.03 p.m.): I rise yet again to join my colleague the member for Noosa in bringing to the attention of the House, and in particular the Minister for Police, the situation regarding police numbers and certain law and order problems on the Sunshine Coast. It certainly is not the first time and it certainly will not be the last that I bring this concern to this place. I know it is easy to beat the drum on law and order issues to seek public support, but let me assure honourable members that we do have what appear to be unique problems on the Sunshine Coast.

The first is that we are particularly disadvantaged by the current police staffing allocation model. Let me say at the outset that an objective mechanism to allocate police so as to avoid the log rolling in politics is essential. But the question is: how objective is the current model? How objective is to it allocate 40% of the staff in relation to the givens, such as existing police stations, which for historical reasons might not have been allocated objectively historically? In addition, the demographics might have altered so dramatically that the givens no longer represent an objective measure of policing requirements. By that, I mean that if it is desirable to have an objective staffing model, then should it not apply across-the-board from a zero base? I think so.

Having established that, how objective is the current model? The weightings for population would seem to be reasonable and one can see the reasoning behind weightings for the various levels of offences recorded. I would, however, suggest that the weightings for DVAs are probably not adequate due to the time consumed in this activity. But if the population and crimes are accounted for, why add another layer for youth, ATSI, tourists and urban populations? If these considerations do have an effect on crime, would this not become apparent in the crime figures themselves?

I do not profess to know the answers to these questions, but what I do know and what my Sunshine Coast colleagues know and what Sunshine Coast residents are realising is this: for some reason the north coast region and the Sunshine Coast district in particular are missing out on their fair share of the State's police resources. It is no use the Minister checking the statistics and claiming that we have our entitlement; that is wrong. We have our entitlement only according to the model, which is flawed. In fairness to the system, I will firstly address regions as a whole rather than the smaller districts.

Why should the model come up with such widely different police to population ratios in our coastal regions of 1 to 402 in the Northern Region and 1 to 705 on the north coast? Looking at it another way, if the model was consistent, one would expect the regions to benefit equally over time as extra police officers became available, as their input should not vary too much over, say, two years. So what has been the case? From June 1998 to September this year police to population ratios have improved by 5% across the State. A good allocation model would have spread those officers fairly across the regions. Did it? No. The increase ranged from 3% in Metropolitan South to 13% in the Northern Region.

One would hope that districts, too, would have followed the general pattern. Not so! In June 1998 the Logan District in the Police Minister's backyard had exactly the same police to population ratio as the Sunshine Coast at 1 to 766. If the model was consistent, the two districts should have benefited equally. Did they? No! The Sunshine Coast, probably the most stressed district in Queensland, improved 0.8% over the two years, while Logan jumped a massive 15%. Good luck for Logan; tough luck for us!

It is not the statistics that grate on me; it is the fact that, despite the great work of the officers posted to our region and the Sunshine Coast in particular, we do not have the numbers on the ground over a protracted period to address the problems in various parts of the Sunshine Coast caused particularly by hoons, many of whom are visiting from other areas. Their numbers are not even taken into account in the staffing model. I call on the Minister to address the issues that I have raised here tonight. I raise them in fairness to the Sunshine Coast residents.
