



Speech by

Mr. R. CONNOR

MEMBER FOR NERANG

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QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

Mr CONNOR (Nerang—LP) (6.25 p.m.): The Minister questioned my description of the scene in Nerang as being a war zone. Unlike the Minister, I was there. That is the difference. The incident occurred right behind my office. Imagine walking into a shop where there is broken glass everywhere. The shop contains glass cases and there was smashed glass all over the place. There was a line of bullet holes that big running right up the back wall. There was a fellow in the shop who had blood all over his face and a scar down the side of his face where a bullet just missed him. He had pock marks on his face from broken glass. He had blood all over his face and all down his shirt. Besides that, there was a fellow lying on the floor who later died. I was in Egypt just after a war and it looked just the same. I invite the Minister to tell me what it looks like if it does not look like a war zone. I make the point that I was there.

I would like to especially commend all the police who service the Gold Coast hinterland community. They do a great job—often under difficult circumstances. It is a difficult job. At times I am sure they must feel that their task is insurmountable. I am also sure that they feel at times that their efforts are not appreciated. On behalf of the people of the Gold Coast hinterland community, I want to assure the officers that they are appreciated and they are held in high esteem.

I know that, when it really matters, they are there ready to do their duty in the finest traditions of the service. I am sure that police officers in other areas of the State are equally hardworking and are equally appreciated. I have no doubt that other parts of the State have similar problems to those that we have on the Gold Coast.

In this case, however, I wish to highlight the difficult circumstances under which Nerang police officers must work. In previous debates in this House I have described the limited resources with which they have to work. I have also described some of the consequences of the limitation of resources.

In this debate I wish to list the specific areas that need improving. As I said before, I have no doubt that other areas have a similar limitation of resources. In Nerang, the single major problem is lack of police numbers. The Nerang policing model needs to be increased to at least 35 operational police. This may sound a lot, but one must consider that police must have a presence seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Just to have two police officers operational in a car 24 hours a day requires many times that number.

There are 21 eight-hour shifts in a week. Assuming police officers did not get sick, did not have holidays and did not need training, one would still need 10 police officers in order to have two officers out in a car 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But, of course, there needs to be considerably more officers in order to cover the issues I have just mentioned. There also needs to be supervision, administration and many other duties too numerous to mention. Even with a police car on the road 24 hours a day, we would still not deal effectively with Nerang's problems. Nerang has grown too much.

Firstly, we need a crime car for peak crime periods. At the moment we have cars coming in from other parts of the coastal strip. The hinterland covers a very big area—800 square kilometres. We do not have the necessary street signage or street lighting. It is hard to find one's way around. Unless one is intimately attached to the area and knows it backwards it is very hard to find places. Police officers also have to cover very great distances. We need locals servicing the area. We need a 24-hour service. We also need a crime car for peak crime periods.

We need foot patrols. I might add that, today, we had the first foot patrols in Nerang since I have been in this Parliament. It would seem that we are getting some reaction. We also need police for normal investigative and proactive policing, conducting day-to-day investigations into reported crimes. This would free up car patrols for more proactive policing. We need a summons and warrants car to deal with the backlog. There is a massive backlog of summonses and warrants in the Nerang area.

As I said earlier, we need our own police car at night, rather than sharing a car with Mudgeeraba. We need a public servant to augment the police to deal with the backlog of administrative paperwork. We also need to fast-track new firearms and supplies of capsicum spray in Nerang. We also need sufficient overtime being made available so that officers can work and catch up on the backlog. As I said before, Nerang has its problems. I commend the police for the hard work they do in Nerang. They are highly respected and highly regarded.
