



Speech by

VAUGHAN JOHNSON

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Hansard 1 June 2000

QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

Mr JOHNSON (Gregory—NPA) (6.44 p.m.): This evening, in rising to support the motion of my colleague the member for Toowoomba South, I wish to address some of the issues raised by the member for Springwood and also the member for Lytton. They could take a leaf out of the book of the former Speaker of this Parliament, Neil Turner, who said that dirt thrown is ground lost. I think those two gentlemen could learn a lot from that. Nothing positive has come from the mouths of either of those two members tonight.

We are not talking about interfering with police carrying out their duties, we are talking about what the Police Service deserves—the support of this Parliament. These are some of the most dedicated and professional men and women in our society today. Almost daily we see police putting their lives on the line for us but not getting the total support they need, in spite of the Government's denial there are budget constraints, staff shortages, car shortages and general resource shortages.

These constraints are often felt in country areas first because smaller budgets do not provide the flexibility available under bigger budgets. The wives and families of police officers are being used to supplement the service. That is recognised by country people, but it is not fully appreciated by the Minister and his Government. Some of the wives do a great job under very difficult circumstances. My area covers some four police districts—Mount Isa, Longreach, and soon Charleville and Rockhampton—and I have a fairly good understanding of what country policing is all about. The city police are stretched, and country police, too, are working under very difficult circumstances. Country people are being disadvantaged through having to make do with one-man stations due to shortages and the stupid, antiquated process for the selection of officers, which involves a ludicrous waiting game to see who gets the nod and then a ludicrous appeal process to see why somebody else cannot have the job. Sometimes months go by before we see vacancies filled.

In urban areas services are run off their feet and there are regular delays in attending to Code 2, or urgent, jobs. There is a shortage of resources at some of our city stations, both on the north side and the south side of the city. There is a definite need for enhancements to the Dog Squad, which is often not on duty. Usually there is one on the north side and one on the south side. Resources are needed in the area of support investigations, for example, to apprehend drug pushers—the real scourge of society. Again, this is creeping into my electorate. I referred to this issue last week and I am working very closely with the police in my electorate to make sure that we keep this element out.

The underfunding of police places them in danger. Police put their lives in danger. They are operating against the odds because of the reduced resources they have to work with. This again encourages the law breakers. Police are human beings doing a great job against the odds. They need support. An example of police underfunding is written on the walls of motorways across the city. For example, men are working on the new busway to the south, yet there are louts in this city putting graffiti all over that magnificent piece of infrastructure. This is another example of police underfunding.

I notice in Brisbane that police resources are being cut and people are not able to get police when they need them. The member for Toowoomba South touched on that this evening, as did the members for Nerang, Albert and Mooloolah. The Minister can say all he likes, but it is about time we recognised the urgent need for extra police, extra funding and extra resources so that the police can carry out their job. This is a priority area in our community. Our police must have adequate funding to

make sure that the law is upheld and the criminal element, who have no respect for themselves let alone their fellow citizens, can be brought to justice; so that that anarchy is taken off our streets and out of our communities.

One of the main issues of concern in country police stations is that of replacement officers for officers on holidays. There is a great shortage of replacement officers. The draconian policy adopted by this Government is certainly not accommodating the provision of replacement officers. It is also a concern when officers go away for seminars and are not replaced. At times there are days, weeks and months when we have no police in some of those one-man stations in isolated and remote Queensland. Windorah is a classic example. It is one of the main arteries to the desert, Birdsville and other remote places, yet at the moment it has no police—

Time expired.
