



Speech by

WARREN PITT

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (6.49 p.m.): To quote from the great Australian movie *The Castle*, the member for Toowoomba South must be dreamin' if he thinks that there is any credence in his assertion that somehow the Queensland Police Service is underfunded. We know that he has less than a wholehearted hold of the shadow portfolio, because if he paid closer attention he would notice that there have never been more police, there have never been more police cars and never before have police worked under better conditions of employment. They had never even dreamt of some of the new technology and new equipment they now have. It is a far cry from the so-called good old days under Joh when my dad, who was a police officer, hammered out his reports using two-finger typing on an old typewriter. Worse still is the fact that the service did not even provide it; he had to pay for it himself.

I am going to confine most of my remarks to the Far Northern Queensland region, which I am closest to. Firstly, the budget for the Far Northern region was increased in this year's Budget by \$3.4m, or 10.5%. That is right, a 10.5% increase in the Far Northern region—not a cut, not an increase for inflation, but a 10.5% increase in real terms. Secondly, capital works included new stations at Bamaga, Coen and Laura and a new station at Edmonton.

In relation to that new station at Edmonton, the former coalition Government let the people of Mulgrave down in its two and a bit years in office. It boasted that it would establish a 24-hour police station in the Edmonton area. It never did. It was all talk and no action, which is typical of its approach to law and order issues. The coalition never got around to fulfilling this promise. It considered window shopping in real estate agencies for a site in the caneland between Edmonton and Gordonvale as a substitute for real action. A facility remote from the population hub would have been totally unsatisfactory. Had the previous Government ever followed through with this misguided plan, the community would have been short-changed. Further, it would have resulted in the downgrading of both the Edmonton and the Gordonvale Police Stations. This would have diminished the visible police presence in those urban areas where it is really needed.

At the moment there is only a 16-hour police coverage in the area, with backup being supplied by Cairns. This new station, which is under construction right now, is being built for future growth so that we will not have to go through this scenario in 5 to 10 years' time. The final police numbers for the station have yet to be finalised, but a 24-hour station normally has about 20 general duties officers as well as a capacity for CIB and JAB officers. I understand that the new station will have a duty officers' equipment store, a general duties day room, a day room for the CIB, a day room for JAB, two electronic interview rooms, two holding cells, a vehicle holding inspection yard, a major incident room and a backup communication room for the Cairns district.

Also on capital works, there has been planning for a new station at Kowanyama, the opening recently of the Cairns Airport wing and traffic facility, and a new shopfront is being put in place in the Cairns Central Shopping Centre. There has also been a trial of police at Yarrabah and Badu Island—the QATSP program, which is a roaring success. We have also had funding for a replacement water police vessel at Cairns.

Thirdly, the Far Northern region has had an increase in sworn officers of 88 officers since the Beattie Government came to power. On 30 June 1998 there were 476 officers in the Far Northern region. As at 1 May 2000 there were 564 officers. This is a massive increase, which is making a

massive difference to our community. People know that there are more police in the street and they know that it is because of the Beattie Labor Government.

Fourthly, these police are properly resourced. They have new guns, new handcuffs and new batons. I am very proud to say that we have received 14 extra vehicles in the Far Northern region since we have been in Government. It defies belief that the member for Toowoomba South can come into this House and whinge and whine about police resources when the facts are that they have never been better. I suggest that either he resigns as Opposition spokesperson for Police and Corrective Services and take up something that he has his heart in, such as knocking over his leader or, if he decides to stay on, he should get serious about it, learn about the portfolio, do some serious research, get his figures right and make a considered contribution. Let us have no more emotive and wild allegations. He should not waste this Parliament's time with a ridiculous motion such as this.
