



Speech by

WARREN PITT

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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PROPERTY CRIME

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (6.22 p.m.): I rise to speak against the motion moved by the member for Toowoomba South and seconded by the member for Moggill. It is amazing that those opposite stand in this House with monotonous regularity and engage in untruths about law and order issues in this State.

However, their track record in Government falls far short of the empty rhetoric they employ both here and in the media. Members of the coalition shamelessly beat the law and order drum as some substitute for real policy. They have no compunction about distorting the truth for cheap political gain. They have no concern for the vulnerable whom they would have live in unnecessary fear. Tonight's motion is just one more instance of an Opposition that is policy bankrupt. Those opposite are trying to use the basest of political tactics—fear.

Let us look at the real situation. In my own part of the world, far-north Queensland, property crime has fallen. This has resulted from a combination of good policing and good Government policy. This Government has committed increased police resources in far-north Queensland, and I take this opportunity to thank the Police Minister for that. The new Edmonton police station is almost at the lock-up stage, and it will not be long before we can open a 24-hour police station on the southern side of Cairns. Property crime fell 7.1% in the Cairns police district, which includes Cape York Peninsula. An even better result was recorded in the Innisfail police district, where property crime fell a very significant 9.7%. That is a great result.

I have here a photocopy of the front page of the Innisfail Advocate of 31 October 2000. The headline reads "Bank heist charges". The article spells out that the Westpac Bank branch was held up at 2.20 on a Thursday afternoon and by 3 o'clock on the following Saturday morning the people involved were in custody. The police recovered property including the money taken from the bank, four knives, two replica pistols, liquor, cameras and electrical goods. Obviously, some of that property came from other offences. The officer in charge of the Innisfail police district, Inspector Swan, expressed his thanks to the public for their help during the investigation of the armed robbery. He said—

"This is a very satisfying job, made all the more satisfying by the very high level of public assistance the police received.

I would like to express my thanks to the officers of the Innisfail police and the Innisfail public for all their hard work and assistance."

It comes of good leadership and good police work. The people of Innisfail and far-north Queensland are very proud of the Police Service being able to clean up that crime in no time.

The Beattie Labor Government has delivered a series of record budgets for Police, and the benefits of those record budgets are being experienced in communities all around the State, including the far north. I know that the police to population ratio for the far northern police region has improved from one officer for every 474 people, as it was at the time this Government was elected, to one officer for every 412 people.

In Innisfail the number of unlawful entries of shops fell 40.2% in 1999-2000 compared with the previous 12-month period. The number of break-ins of homes fell 35.8%. They are both very good results. I also take this opportunity to point out that the number of crimes against the person in the

Innisfail police district fell 2.3%, including a 25.5% drop in the number of sexual offences and a 20% drop in the number of robberies.

As I mentioned earlier, in the Cairns police district the number of property offences fell 7.1%. That drop includes a 25.5% decrease in the number of vehicles stolen, an 18.2% fall in the number of shops broken into and a 3% drop in the number of homes unlawfully entered. Obviously, the policies of this Government are working.

I can assure members here and now that the people of far-north Queensland appreciate the extra police resources they have received under the Beattie Labor Government. They appreciate the fact that there is less chance that their homes and businesses will be broken into. This will always be an issue for the community while ever there is crime and as long as there are victims of crime. That is the same the world over; it is not confined to Queensland. Crime is an issue, no matter who is in Government.

What is inexcusable is the Opposition trying to whip up unnecessary fear of crime in the community for purely political reasons. The members opposite know that we are putting more police on the beat, whether that beat is in Innisfail, Cairns, Charleville or suburban Brisbane. They also know that this Government is giving those police the resources and the powers they need to do their jobs effectively.

The Government and, more importantly, the community know that the coalition's futile attempts at a law and order auction are falling well and truly flat. Opposition members have beaten this drum once too often. The electorate will favourably judge this Minister and this Government for their commitment to the safety of Queenslanders and the protection of their property.
