



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION AND MISCONDUCT TRIBUNALS AMENDMENT BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (10.15 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak tonight in support of this bill, realising that what is before us basically retains the status quo of how our present Police Service operates. I take this opportunity to mention to the minister my intention to continue to push for a permanent police presence in Buderim, a service that would also cover the surrounding suburbs which fall within my electorate of Kawana. Buderim and the surrounding suburbs of Buderim Meadows, Buderim Pines, Buderim Chase, Mountain Creek, Glenfields, Chancellor Park and Sippy Downs have experienced a greater proportion of this expansion over recent years and will continue to expand at a rapid rate for many years into the future, particularly the areas of Sippy Downs and Buderim South. These areas are presently serviced by Maroochy police, their division covering from the coast between the Mooloolah and Maroochy Rivers west to the Bruce Highway.

Since my election to this new seat of Kawana, I have continued to hold talks with top-level police managers responsible for the policing of the Sunshine Coast and, in particular, the Maroochy police division, incorporating the area of concern. These discussions revealed that an in-depth needs assessment was recently conducted by the Police Service to assess future policing needs for the Maroochy police division, Buderim and Sippy Downs, and certain recommendations were made to the assistant commissioner of police responsible for that area.

As a result of the concerns expressed to me by police and community leaders, I believed it necessary to seek further and more detailed information and gathered statistical data relating to these areas in question. From this data I ascertained that the population residing in the Maroochy police division is approximately 60,000. Minimum population growth for the Maroochy shire is estimated to be about three per cent per annum, with the greater percentage occurring in areas within the Maroochy police division, that is, Buderim and its neighbouring suburbs. The tourist population in that division is estimated to be in the vicinity of 150,000 over the Christmas and Easter holiday periods. For other holiday periods, the figures show up to 75,000 or 80,000 and, on average, an additional 10,000 for the remaining periods.

The coastal strip from Mooloolaba to Maroochy will continue to experience rapid growth through development and tourism. The Maroochy CBD will continue to experience rapid expansion and is presently recognised as the key regional centre, being classified as the retail and commercial hub for the Sunshine Coast. Police have informed me that the calls for a police response have risen from 8,918 calls in 1995 to 14,191 calls in the year 2000, with approximately 75 per cent of calls being for the coastal suburbs from Mooloolaba to Maroochy. This would indicate that the main police presence in this division is confined to the coastal strip, with minimum time spent in the remainder of the division due to policing demands and the current staffing levels at Maroochy.

With respect to Buderim and its surrounding suburbs, particularly Sippy Downs, the population is in the vicinity of 27,000. Obviously, more accurate statistics will be available after the 2001 census. Police calls for service in this area have risen from 1,123 calls in 1995 to 3,823 calls in the year 2000. The suburb of Sippy Downs evolved about six years ago, along with the Sunshine Coast University. Both the Sunshine Coast University and Sippy Downs have since experienced rapid expansion, with the current suburban population in excess of 3,000 and a student population of approximately 3,141, many of whom reside close to campus.

Population forecasts for Sippy Downs is a growth of 3,000 persons over the next five years, followed by an additional 3,000 over the subsequent five years. A survey conducted by the Maroochy Shire Council resulted in the drafting of the Sippy Downs Town Centre Urban Design Master Plan and Transport Study. Reference in this plan indicates the annual growth within the Maroochy shire to range between 4,000 and 5,000 persons per annum to the year 2013 and predicts that the defined Sippy Downs area, including Buderim South, will account for 20 per cent of the total growth of the shire over that period.

Prior to my election to state parliament I was the deputy chairman of the Sunshine Coast Economic Development Board. Within this role I became well aware that the majority of future growth of the Sunshine Coast is predicted to be south of and including Buderim, Sippy Downs, Buderim Chase, Buderim Meadows, Mountain Creek, Buderim Pines, Kawana Waters, et cetera. Major development in retail business, commercial, light industry and residential is planned for these suburbs with the completion of a Woolworths supermarket at Sippy Downs, planned for completion by October this year. The rate of expansion in this area is supported by the fact that Woolworths is currently constructing another supermarket at Buderim, due to be opened in coming weeks, a distance of only approximately five kilometres from Sippy Downs.

Discussions with police management also reveal that the Police Service owns a sizeable and ideally situated parcel of land—4,600 square metres—on Main Street, Buderim, in close proximity to the Buderim CBD. This land is currently undeveloped and used by locals as a car park—yet another fine of example police addressing concerns identified by the local community. To further support the construction of a permanent police establishment in Buderim, I ascertained that accommodation at Maroochydhore police district headquarters has reached saturation level and new accommodation will be required to meet the increase of resources in the near future. The two-storey building was constructed in 1987 and designed to accommodate 75 personnel. Since that time, due to both increases in staffing levels, police and civilian, and the introduction of additional sections and positions, accommodation on both levels of the building has reached capacity. Sections such as the district criminal investigation and juvenile aid branches have been sectionalised and moved to other police stations through the district to reduce overcrowding at Maroochydhore.

The district police communications section, located in a small room on the first floor of the building, which has a staffing level of 20, also requires urgent relocation. The workload and staffing levels in that section alone have doubled over the past five years due to the growth on the Sunshine Coast. There is in excess of 100 personnel presently working at the Maroochydhore police headquarters—well over the 75 persons it was designed to accommodate.

Additionally, the north coast police regional office is located a short distance from Maroochydhore headquarters and occupies three levels of a building, with the premises being leased by the Queensland Police Service. A large portion of money is spent annually by the QPS on the leasing arrangement. It would appear that this is an unnecessary expenditure that could be better utilised by establishing a police headquarters complex at Buderim on land already owned by the Queensland Police Service. The present recommendation outlined in the needs assessment conducted by the police recommended the construction of a building on the police reserve at Buderim large enough to accommodate a 24-hour general duties police station and district and regional resources. This recommendation was aimed at satisfying long-term police accommodation needs on the Sunshine Coast and at reducing long-term government expenditure. In conclusion, and most importantly, I feel that government expenditure on such a project would satisfy urgent policing needs on the Sunshine Coast, both now and for many years into the future, and should be seen as a high priority.

Another matter which I would like to draw to the attention of the House is the police presence on our beaches. I wish to bring to the attention of the House a very positive and new service that is being provided by Queensland police to the residents of the Kawana Waters area. A new police quad bike is working out of the Kawana Waters Police Station and it is literally churning up the beach crime rate along with the kilometres of sand that it churns up.

Last year, while I was a councillor on the Caloundra City Council, I worked in good cooperation with Senior Sergeant Paul Sarquis and Sergeant Jed Graham of the Kawana Waters Police Station to address an issue that had concerned many local residents and visitors alike in these sometimes very quiet beach areas that often attract unwanted people who can prey on females or just simply do the wrong thing on the beach or in the dunes.

With the help of the local police, we realised that similar problems had been occurring on the northern end of the Gold Coast along The Spit and beaches in that area. These negative issues were quickly addressed when quad bikes were purchased by the local council and utilised by police to ensure that the deviants and negative people in society who wish to ruin other people's good times were quickly moved on, apprehended and often arrested.

When Caloundra City Council purchased the quad bike, it was for a 12-month trial period so that we could ascertain its level of success and how it was gauged. I have no doubt that the first quarterly

report will strongly support the purchase of Caloundra City Council's quad bike and that the feedback will be very positive, as it has been constantly mentioned to me that people are once again visiting the beaches by themselves and that families are flocking back to the beaches due to the positive police presence. People now feel a lot more secure, as these deviants have been moved on and/or apprehended. I believe there has also been a drop in the incidence of theft, but residents should definitely still maintain vigilance with valuables when they are on the beach.

The present beach patrol by the Kawana Waters police on these quad bikes extends from Point Cartwright, which is at the northern end of Kawana Waters, to Currimundi Lake. When we introduced the beach patrol, it was designed to target theft, drug problems, indecency and public nuisances in an area that was, in the past, a difficult area for police to access. Because in the past many of the crimes went unreported, it is hard to properly ascertain how large a reduction in crime these new patrols have achieved. But if their success is judged on acceptance by the locals, it is now a very valuable police service provided by the local Kawana Waters Police Station, which is obviously a part of the Queensland Police Service. The police work in very good cooperation with the local lifeguards supplied by the Caloundra City Council and, of course, the volunteer surf-lifesaving club located at Buddina.

I encourage any members who have similar problems in secluded beach areas to approach their local councils in cooperation with the local police. If the local council can purchase similar quad bikes, I believe many of these negatives can be turned into positives in our society.

A similar issue is attempting to be addressed in the not-too-distant future with local councillors on the Sunshine Coast—including Caloundra City Council, Maroochy Shire Council and Noosa Shire Council—purchasing jet skis for police use. The police will man these jet skis and will act as a deterrent by apprehending people on the water who are breaking the law and doing the wrong thing. Again, this positive police presence will be very well appreciated by local communities both now and into the future. It is obvious that not only a good police force but a good police presence is ideal. I support the bill.
