



Speech by

**Hon. T. McGRADY**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA**

Hansard 29 November 2001

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Crime Statistics**

**Hon. T. McGRADY** (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Carpentaria Minerals Province) (9.57 a.m.), by leave: I rise to report to the House on the government's efforts to combat crime in our community. In recent weeks, those sitting opposite have spent a lot of time focusing on the negative aspects of this year's statistical review. Can I say from the outset that I would welcome a more cooperative approach to this issue because it is an important one, and one which everybody in this House should be working to address.

The government is committed to getting tough on crime. As I said yesterday, statistics are indeed a strange creature. As long as the sample is broad enough, they are very easy to manipulate to support both arguments. Whilst members of the opposition concentrate on the not-so-good statistics, they forget to mention that we have seen some decreases in homicides and, indeed, drug offences. Again, these statistics will vary from year to year, but last year we did see a decline.

I believe that another excellent way to attack crime is to have tough but fair legislation in relation to weapons. In 1996, uniform national gun laws were introduced across Australia by the Howard government and ratified by the various states, including the then Borbidge government. Since then the Queensland National Party has continually flirted with the idea of watering down this legislation in an attempt to revitalise its own support.

Members of the opposition talk about getting tough on crime, but where are they when it comes to ensuring that our tough but fair gun laws are preserved? In the last year there was a 14 per cent drop in the number of reported offences for unlicensed possession of a firearm. We have also seen an increase in the number of basic firearm licences issued. I believe the current legislation is getting across the message that it is unacceptable to be unlawfully in possession of a firearm.

Earlier this year, we took the opportunity to further strengthen the legislation when we closed a loophole in relation to replica hand guns. I today call on the leaders of the Liberal and National Parties to make their position clear on this matter. The current regime allows people access to weapons for sporting or pastoral purposes but does so in a regulated manner, which includes weapons registration and licensing.

No-one should forget the tragedy which prompted the uniform national gun legislation. In the near future, the House will consider a disallowance motion put forward by the member for Gladstone on the weapons issue. This is an excellent opportunity—

**Mr Seeney** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Callide!

**Mr Horan** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Opposition! Order!

**Mr McGRADY:** This an excellent opportunity for members of the coalition to demonstrate to the House their true intentions with respect to the issue of weapons legislation, and I await their response eagerly.

Finally, I want to talk about police numbers in our community. The way members of the opposition rant and rave, one would think they had an excellent record when it comes to law and order.

Let us never forget that when the coalition was in government they promised Queenslanders 695 extra police but delivered only 437. By contrast—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! We are going to hear this statement.

**Mr McGRADY:** As I said before, the coalition promised 695 extra police but delivered only 437. By contrast, in our first term the Beattie government promised 813 extra police but delivered 836. The Beattie government will continue to increase police numbers. In fact, the commissioner tells me that not only will we meet our commitment of about 300 extra officers this financial year, we will also employ about 60 extra civilians. These positions are fully funded and will be delivered.

This is our record and it more than stands up against the last coalition government. But the bottom line when it comes to crime is that we remain vigilant. This includes providing more police and more police funding but it also requires the community to become involved in crime prevention. Proactive initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch and the At Risk Premises program can be very helpful in this regard, and I call on all members to spread this message right throughout their constituencies.

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