



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard 14 October 2003

POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION [ALCOHOL AND DRUG TESTING] AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (9.47 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to rise in support of the Police Service Administration (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Amendment Bill. I was very pleased to be here for the contribution of the member for Gladstone and hear of her support for the bill as well. What this bill is all about is supporting police officers, supporting their welfare. I have spoken to many police officers with regard to what is in this bill. Each and every one of them said to me, 'We know what the government is trying to do. We know that the government is trying to assist us in the very difficult job that we do'. I was very pleased, as I said at the outset, to hear the member for Gladstone supporting this very worthwhile legislation.

The Queensland Police Service remains amongst the very best in the world. Every member of this House knows that. Every member of this House recognises it. Our officers do a tremendous job leading the community and fighting crime. This bill, which seeks to provide for random alcohol breath testing and urine drug testing for police officers and staff members, is a result of a fact of life. While many people would prefer to bury their heads in the sand and avoid the fact that substance abuse exists in the Police Service, it is a fact that this government is not only willing to acknowledge; it is also willing to do something about it.

I think it takes a certain kind of person to become a police officer. We all know that. It must be one of the most challenging professions in this modern day. I take my hat off to the dedicated men and women who take to the streets every day keeping us safe and secure. It is a job which I am sure I would not be cut out for.

I know many police officers through my work in the electorate. They are all very honest, decent community oriented and dedicated professionals. With all this in mind, given the stresses of the job and the enormous responsibility placed on officers of the Queensland Police Service, this House cannot ignore the fact that these officers are human. They are not infallible and they are not machines. They are subject to the stress of their job and the huge and sometimes overwhelming pressures that result from policing. We have heard about that tonight, as the member for Logan said, in relation to police officers in his electorate.

Sadly, with this there will always be an extremely small percentage who may turn to illicit drugs or in fact any drug as a relief from the stressful circumstances they find themselves in. It is for this reason that this government has a responsibility not only to the officers of the Queensland Police Service but also to the wider community to have appropriate measures in place to protect them. I am fully supportive of this bill to ensure the detection and rehabilitation mechanisms are in place to deal with substance abuse in whatever form it may take. This is about welfare.

I am aware that the introduction of this bill caused a stir in the media. The bill has been drafted with the very best interests of police officers and the community in mind. I join with the minister in demanding that the welfare and integrity of our police officers is maintained by this House passing the necessary legislation. It is a positive step forward in ensuring that the QPS remains at the forefront of policing.