



Speech by

DESLEY SCOTT

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (3.06 p.m.): The estimates process has once again given members an opportunity to review the budgets of all government departments, as well as that of the parliament. Estimates Committee B reviewed first Attorney-General and Justice, then Emergency Services and finally Police and Corrective Services. Many of the issues discussed during our deliberations touched on my electorate of Woodridge in various ways, and it is to these issues that I would like to address my comments.

This government made a commitment to the people of Queensland to not only reduce crime but also address the causes of crime. Crime statistics at present have shown a marked decrease. In fact, many areas of crime are at a 10-year low. There are no doubt many reasons for this, including a very professional Police Service that is well trained and focused. We have such initiatives as the Tactical Crime Squad, police shopfronts and police beats giving police a high profile in communities, Neighbourhood Watch groups with all their fine volunteers and, in my area, a Police Service that is very involved in community issues and projects. I should also mention community renewal. Although within the portfolio of the Housing Minister, it has nonetheless had a pronounced impact to reduce crime in the area through some very fine projects.

A further initiative within the portfolio of Attorney-General has been the drug courts trial, which has now been extended due to the positive results seen. At Beenleigh court, Magistrate John Costanzo and his team work very intensively with offenders who have chosen to take the option of kicking their habit. When we consider the high offence level of a drug addict and the fact that it is estimated that 80 per cent of crime is now drug related, we realise that every graduate from the drug court program can represent a significant amount of theft, breaking and entering, drug dealing and so on. With the extension of this program to Cairns and Townsville, I am sure the positive reports will continue. The drug diversion program, which is aimed at early intervention, is yet another initiative to reach young people before they develop an addiction to drugs. I welcome the measures taken in our courts to reduce the stress suffered by children when required to give evidence.

Some 18 months ago I visited the workers at PACT—Protect All Children Today—in my electorate. This is the organisation which offers support to child witnesses. The organisation's role is a very sensitive one, and I know it will applaud measures to speed up the installation of closed-circuit television and other initiatives to shield children from undue stress.

Having recently had the opportunity to visit a number of Cape York Aboriginal communities such as Yarrabah, Bamaga, Aurukun and Napranum, I was very heartened to hear the impact the justice of the peace program is having. Communities are responding in a very significant way to the new justice committees, and the increased number of justices of the peace in these communities continues to empower people to make important decisions which will advance the very positive work going on. I must also applaud the work of the dispute resolutions service and the telephone legal advice service. We all realise the huge divide where people without high income are unable to access legal services.

In the area of emergency services, our Queensland organisations are second to none. I have personally toured the training facility at the Port of Brisbane which attracts fire and emergency services personnel from other states and overseas. Our professionals are well trained and very dedicated to preserving life. Our ambulance levy is now ensuring that our Ambulance Service will be well equipped into the future. I have recently had the pleasure of attending a combined Neighbourhood Watch meeting in my electorate where fire service officers gave a home fire safe presentation. The community

information work done by our fire and ambulance officers is invaluable. At Woodridge Primary School last year the minister launched Adopt a Paramedic, a program to ensure our children understand the 000 concept and acquire some basic safety knowledge, including what to do if mum or dad is lying on the floor unconscious.

I now turn to the police and corrective services review. My electorate, and indeed the whole area of Logan City, has demonstrated that the direction this government is taking in policing is working. We have seen an increase in the number of police officers. I recently attended a swearing-in service at Chandler and was very impressed with the graduates. Diverse in background, age and with many female members, these new constables will make a very valuable contribution to the areas they have been assigned. Police officers in Logan work in partnership with our community on many levels. We see officers attending Neighbourhood Watch meetings—

Time expired.