



Speech by

DESLEY SCOTT

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Hansard 14 October 2003

POLICE SERVICE ADMINISTRATION [ALCOHOL AND DRUG TESTING] AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (6.52 p.m.): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to stand up in this House and proclaim that our Police Service now enjoys a level of respect and high esteem in our community which is not afforded to many. In Logan city our police have consistently performed to a very high level. With a clear-up rate which is enviable and many community functions, our crime statistics have plunged to a 10-year low.

With such roles as school based police officers, shopfronts and police beats, partnerships with organisations working with at-risk youth, our domestic violence partnership Fax-Back, our police community consultative committees, a great network of Neighbourhood Watch volunteers and a great program with our multicultural neighbourhood centre called Open Doors, we have many reasons to thank our police officers. Our Police Service in Logan has been a wonderful partner in ensuring our newly arrived migrants have the best possible introduction to the area. Some of their former countries have police and military that have fearsome records. Imagine getting into a police car never to be seen again. Fazil Rostran, one of our valued cultural workers, and Sue Tasman, our police community liaison officer who has served in the area for many years, were involved in the initial program called Building Bridges. The aim was to offer a friendly face to new arrivals and to instil the message that police are there to serve and help in any way possible. The program was most successful, and a community renewal grant of \$67,000 was given to undertake further workshops over another two-year period. Inspector Maurie Alker of Logan central has been closely involved with the program. We have seen barriers broken down and good relationships formed.

The workshops have assisted to increase mutual respect and understanding, reduce a perceived fear of police, reduce violence against women and children and create partnerships to work towards reducing crime in our area. This has not only offered an opportunity for our ethnic communities to gain a greater understanding of our Police Service and the positive role it plays in our communities but also helped raise awareness on the part of our police of their unique cultural values and beliefs and so help them to deal sensitively with these new members of our community. Our Open Doors project was featured in a display at the launch of Crime Prevention Week, held on Monday last week at the Fortitude Valley PCYC.

The intent of this bill is to ensure the health and safety of our serving officers, in line with similar legislation in New South Wales and Victoria, and also to ensure our communities are safe. The carrying of firearms, the life-and-death situations police officers are often involved in and the possibility of a high-speed car chase require our serving officers to be alert and always at the ready for whatever is required of them. I believe that most officers will already adhere to this code of conduct.

A 0.02 limit of alcohol for officers on duty or on call as well as civilians who work in critical areas seems a reasonable requirement. For any police officer who may have a problem with either prescription or illicit drugs or alcohol, assistance is offered. To members of the community, the role of a police officer is sometimes unimaginable. They have to deal with the very worst of society and very often tragic events. I would hope that help is always there whenever a police officer requires it.

I also believe that it is perfectly reasonable to apply mandatory drug testing to new recruits, given that some 5,000 applicants each year aspire to become police officers and only 600 are chosen. We want the very finest new recruits in the service and there is no room for anyone with a drug habit. I note that undercover officers may be given an exemption from the 0.02 by the Commissioner or a deputy commissioner for certain operations.

Mandatory drug and alcohol testing will be required in relation to an incident such as a road accident involving a police vehicle where a death or injury occurs or when a firearm is discharged. I strongly believe that most police officers are already in line with these requirements. I have every respect for our police and believe that these measures will be supported by our community. I thank our minister and his staff for consistently supporting our Police Service and I commend the bill to the House.