



Speech by

JOHN ENGLISH

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Hansard 26 November 2003

QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (10.25 a.m.): I read with interest an article written by Tony Koch in the *Courier-Mail* on 22 November. Tony Koch states—

The Queensland Police Service without a word of advice to or consultation with the mass media has decided to do away with its analogue radio system and introduce an encrypted digital system.

Elsewhere in the article Tony Koch informs us of the important role the media performs in the democratic process, and I agree with Tony on that point. An effective media is important in ensuring accountability in both the private and public sector. However, I have news for Tony Koch: the police radio network is not a tool of the media. It is an operational tool of the Queensland Police Service. The fact that the media, tow truck operators and criminals have been able to intercept police radio communications in the past does not mean we should continue the practice. Journalists are like every other profession: there are good ones and there are bad ones. Good, hardworking journalists with sources will still be able to know what is going on. Lazy journalists who sit and listen to the scanner all day and use the scanner as a substitute for investigative journalism will be disadvantaged.

The purpose of the police radio system is to allow police to communicate with each other to ensure the safety of all Queenslanders. I have attended numerous critical incidents and have seen the media assist in the resolution of some of these incidents, and I have also seen the media interfere and place themselves and others' lives at risks. I have assisted in high-risk raids on criminals where special secure communications were used as we knew the criminals were using scanners. Why shouldn't all police have the protection of secure communications? If the media were not happy with aspects of the police media unit I suggest they talk to the Commissioner of Police about improving the flow of information. I do not support putting police officers' lives at risk just to make it easier for the media to get their story. We have buried too many police officers and this radio upgrade will improve the operational safety for these officers and I support it 100 per cent.

Tony Koch claims that this is the most serious threat to police accountability in Queensland. The media, particularly with the documentary *The Moonlight State*, performed a crucial role in exposing corruption in Queensland under the National Party government. I cannot remember any examples of radio communications highlighting corruption then or since. I should also point out that the media regularly transfers photographs and other information via digital technology. The hypocrisy is astounding. Digital technology is okay for the media and everyone else.