



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

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APPROPRIATION BILL; ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (3.32 p.m.): I rise to speak in the debate on the Estimates Committee B report to the Police and Corrective Services portfolio. The Minister for Police mentioned an increase of police officers by 300 a year in the last five years and boasts of a bigger increase. However, towns like Greenvale have been left vulnerable by being left without a full-time relief police officer when the town's permanent officer is on leave or relieving.

I am disappointed and concerned that Greenvale was left without a full-time police presence for six weeks from 13 April till 24 May. During that period a relief officer was provided but only for three days a week so the majority of the time the town did not have a police presence, with the nearest police station 210 kilometres away at Charters Towers. I have been informed that, while the town was left without a police officer, an incident occurred with lives and properties threatened, leaving two aged, invalid pensioners shaken and distraught. These pensioners live directly opposite the police station.

The incident had been reported and I understand police are investigating, but the point is these elderly pensioners were left in fear of their lives because when they phoned 000 they were told there was not much that could be done. It is simply not good enough that a remote town such as Greenvale can be left without police. Given the huge increase in heavy road transport carrying ore from Mount Garnet to Century Zinc via Greenvale and Charters Towers coupled with the onset of the peak tourist season and the number of grey army members on the move in four-wheel drives, caravans and motor homes, it is ridiculous to leave Greenvale without a full-time police officer.

From 7 to 18 July the police officer at Greenvale relieved at the Hughenden Police Station. During this period the residents of Greenvale were left without a police officer. A cattle truck rolled over on the Blue Range turn-off near Greenvale and there was no officer in attendance to deal with this situation. The very idea that remote communities such as Greenvale could be left without a police officer is crazy not just for the safety of local residents but also for a large number of travellers and tourists. I call on the Police Minister to address this issue in regards to her saying that they have increased officers by 300 a year, and I would like to see this come into fruition.