



Speech by

**Ted Malone**

**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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## **POLICE POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr MALONE** (Mirani—NPA) (12.41 pm): It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Acts Amendment Bill. I think all members agree that police need legislative backing to allow them to do their jobs properly. Indeed, as the previous speaker said, the criminality in our community is changing dramatically as we move into a more technological age—in terms of the web, internet banking and so on—and there needs to be a continuous evaluation of the powers available to police. This bill will certainly help in that respect.

This is an excellent opportunity for members to record our personal thanks to the police in our electorates who do such a magnificent job under extreme and very difficult conditions from time to time. My electorate in particular is in a very fast-growing area of central Queensland. It has huge population growth, with people coming in to work on construction sites and so on. That is certainly creating pressures, not only on police but also on public facilities right around the area. As I said, the police have been doing a great job and will continue to do so.

No matter how good the legislation is, there is always a need for sufficient resources. Good legislation is utterly useless unless there are good people, and plenty of them, on the ground to make things happen. There are certainly areas in my electorate which do not have a full complement of officer positions filled. The provision of leave for officers in those positions can become fairly difficult at the single-person stations throughout the area.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the government on the new station, which is yet to be opened, at Sarina. It is almost completed. A bit of extra work was being carried out on the car park as I went past the other day. It is a great station. It is a great change in facilities for the police officers and others who work at the Sarina station. Only a couple of years ago, the police union declared the Sarina station the 'dump of the month'. I must say, I agreed with them at that time. It was, and it had been that way for quite a number of years. We were placing extra police in a station that could not accommodate the existing staff. The facilities were substandard, there is no doubt.

The officer in charge at Sarina, Dave Parnell, has a good team there and he is doing a great job. As I said, Sarina is a growing area. The officers now work in a decent environment. All of the police officers from the Sarina station whom I speak to are very pleased with their facility. Senior Sergeant John Black, Detective Tony Lee, Senior Constable Brian Cumming from the traffic police and all of the team there are doing a great job.

Most members would be aware that my electorate encompasses probably one of the most difficult stretches of the Bruce Highway, from just north of Rockhampton through to the other side of Mackay—the notorious Bruce Highway through the Marlborough, St Lawrence, Carmila areas. We have stations at Marlborough, Carmila and St Lawrence.

I believe that the single-officer station at Marlborough is understaffed. Really, Marlborough needs two officers. There is an area of about 120 kilometres north of Rockhampton and another 100-plus

kilometres north to St Lawrence before the next station. It is a reasonably remote area. There is a black spot on that highway in terms of the number of very serious accidents that happen in that region. Currently, Constable John Schilton is the officer in charge of Marlborough police. He and others before him have had to turn out to some very horrific road accidents. There have been bus smashes, semitrailer rollovers and single-car accidents. That area has to be well maintained and well provisioned in terms of police resources.

That area also encompasses quite a bit of regional Queensland and rural communities to the west and to the east, down to Stanage Bay and across to a little place called Ogmoo. Not many people live there now but, obviously, it is still an area that has to be policed. As I said, I believe that the Marlborough station should be a two-person station and that should be taken into consideration.

St Lawrence and Carmila are single-officer stations. Those officers are also called out on a regular basis for traffic patrolling and so on. It really is a very busy highway and one of the black spots is also in that area. Constable Peter Cowan is based at Carmila and Senior Constable David Maudsley is based at St Lawrence.

The Bruce Highway will continue to become busier. The Peak Downs Highway, west of Mackay, heads out to the minefields at Moranbah, Coppabella and onward out to Dysart. As a result of growth in the coal industry, that is becoming extremely busy. A lot of fatal accidents are occurring on the Peak Downs Highway.

Constable Gavin Hill is the officer in charge at Nebo. Nebo is becoming quite a regional centre with a large number of accommodation units. The officer positioned at Nebo is very busy, with the wide loads that move through the area. Constable Gavin Hill is responsible, obviously, for a lot of the paperwork involved in shifting those loads through the area. He also has to patrol the highway. That station at Nebo needs to become a two-man station or at least needs the services of an administration officer to help out the police officer in terms of his duties.

The newspaper today has highlighted the dangerous aspects of 12-hour shifts for mineworkers who drive while tired. At least three fatalities have occurred in recent months. Obviously, a lot of that is caused by fatigue. Constable Gavin Hill has done an extensive report on fatigue and driving, and I know that that is being looked at. It probably needs to be highlighted to a greater extent. Constable Gavin Hill is a man of many talents. Currently, he is in Canada representing Australia in kickboxing. He is a pretty all-round sort of character and a great guy.

The Mackay-Eungella Road is also well travelled. We are fortunate to have Sergeant Fred Baguley as officer in charge of the Mirani Police Station. Fred has been a long-term resident of the Pioneer Valley. Fred is an example of the best aspects of community policing. The bill is about supporting police officers in their work in our community and I congratulate the government on supporting the great police throughout our community. Fred Baguley is a typical example of community policing. Fred knows what is going on. He cruises around and talks to people and is doing a great job. Sergeant Dan Graham at Marian is also a terrific guy; his mode of operation is very similar to Fred. He knows the community and works well with it. I make the point that that area is growing very, very quickly and there needs to be provision set aside for new police stations to maintain police numbers in the Pioneer Valley.

There are a couple of issues that I have some concerns with in relation to the SPERS scheme which allows police officers to recognise through licence checks whether people have a criminal history, et cetera. There are some loopholes in that particular scheme whereby people have to be notified if their licence is out of date or has been cancelled. As members know, we have a very fluid population in Queensland. Many people never receive or pretend they have never received notification that their licence has been cancelled. When they are actually pulled up on the side of the road and informed that their licence has been cancelled they will automatically indicate that they were unaware of that, as anyone would do, and thereby the police officer has to let them go because they have to actually be aware that their licence has been cancelled before action can be taken against them. I am not sure how we can get around that, but certainly that is an issue.

Under the CrimTrac scheme, which enables officers to gain criminal record checks not only in this state but also throughout Australia, there is the issue of states not cooperating as much as they should. Certainly there are some loopholes there. I understand there is excessive cost involved in acquiring those records as well as a substantial time delay involved. Police officers have pulled people up on the side of the road and because of the delays and problems in relation to CrimTrac have virtually had to allow criminals to go free. That is an issue that certainly needs to be sorted out in cooperation with other states. It is an important management tool for police officers as well as for their security.

In relation to RBT, an important tool used by police in Queensland for detecting intoxicated drivers, unfortunately there appears to be no provision in the construction of roads to allow for police to operate RBTs safely without danger to themselves or the general public. We have quite a number of large functions throughout the electorate that are on single-lane roads where it is almost impossible for the police to set up RBT stations simply because they are too narrow and do not allow the police to operate safely or, indeed,

in a way that is safe for drivers who are travelling backwards and forwards along those roads. That is a worry to us all because once the travelling public get away from that particular event, the roads lead everywhere. Potentially we could have intoxicated drivers heading out onto the highways, or any other area for that matter, without proper detection by the police.

The other issue is the conflict between government departments, in particular Transport, that is caused by insisting that police do these random breath tests. We have the situation where the police are basically forced to endeavour to maintain numbers in terms of breath testing but are not given the facilities to enable that to happen in a safe and effective way.

Another important thing for the travelling public in relation to police issues is the Driver Reviver stations throughout the state. I have spoken about the Bruce Highway and the dangerous section of highway between Rockhampton and Mackay. A very significant Driver Reviver station is based at Waverley Creek just south of St Lawrence. The Department of Transport has been pretty miserly in terms of providing facilities there. At another time I will raise specific issues in relation to that, but it is a critical and specific issue in terms of safe traffic management where people—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wallace): Order! I have been pretty lenient on the debate. Can you come back to matters relating to the bill.

**Mr MALONE:** In terms of legislation, it is important for police officers to have the support of the Queensland parliament and it is important for members of parliament to raise the issues which are of concern to the police officer in his electorate. I am endeavouring to present the views of some people who have a very significant profile and who represent the police in my electorate. These people have real concerns about the fatigue management on our roads and in particular the Bruce Highway between Rockhampton and Mackay.

People come down on a volunteer basis to run the facility at Waverley Creek and are given very little in the way of support. They have to open up the signs, which they do not get fuel money for; they have to bring their own milk to make the cups of tea; there are no facilities for them to stop over; the shed that they deliver the coffee and bickies out of is not air-conditioned. In the heat of summer it is almost impossible for them to maintain their presence. I think that is unbelievable.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Mirani is getting back to the matters on the bill, is he not?

**Mr MALONE:** Thank you. It is important. I congratulate all the police officers in my electorate on the great work that they do.

**Mr Caltabiano** interjected.

**Mr MALONE:** They do a magnificent job.

**Mr Caltabiano** interjected.

**Mr MALONE:** The issue of the highways in my electorate is of concern to everybody.

**Mr Caltabiano** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Chatsworth, I believe you are next on the list. You might want to wait until then.

**Mr MALONE:** With those few words, I resume my seat.