



Speech by

Jack Dempsey

MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

Hansard Wednesday, 14 November 2007

LAW AND ORDER

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—NPA) (6.07 pm): I rise to speak on the motion before the House tonight. Labor's soft-on-crime record is reflected in this government's failure to adequately support and maintain crime prevention strategies into the 21st century. The majority of Queenslanders believe that by working together we can all play an important role in the fight against crime and that through a hand-in-glove partnership with other government agencies we can achieve positive results. Through this type of partnership, governments will reduce social issues, decrease police calls to service and have a positive impact on all communities.

This state government, however, has closed its whole-of-government coordinating crime prevention office and we now see that the Queensland Police Service has been handed total responsibility for crime prevention throughout this great state. At a time when we should all be working together we see the hardworking staff of the Queensland Police Service being pushed out on a limb and being told to fix the problems of society by themselves. This is a cold and heartless approach to modern-day policing and it is further reflected when we know that this government has been sitting on a crime prevention through environmental design report since it was due in June 2007.

The state government has provided police with a mere \$275,000 to develop crime prevention strategies. This equates to approximately \$30 per police officer. That is not even the price of a carton of that great Bundaberg product, Bundaberg Ginger Beer. We also need to be supporting our front-line police officers with strong legislation and equipment to keep them and the community safe. We also have to provide initiatives to assist police to transfer to and stay in remote areas. The Remote Area Incentive Scheme is supported by the Police Service and the Queensland Police Union. However, we see this state government again making promises and not delivering by not coming forward with the funding for this much-needed initiative.

I commend this government for providing \$10,000 in initiatives to encourage police to Indigenous communities, but this assistance needs to be widened to also encourage police to other western and remote locations. A support package including initiatives such as educational funding to assist families, boarding school fees and even free internet access to help promote communication would go a long way to assisting police and their families.

Members spoke earlier about police pay. Police pay needs to be increased to match the service they provide to the community. Members also mentioned phone-tapping powers earlier this evening. Once again we see the blame game, with the federal government being mentioned in relation to the Public Interest Monitor. The Premier stated this morning in the House that she will ring the federal government after the election and ask that the issue of the Public Interest Monitor be addressed. I ask the Premier here tonight to simply pick up the phone now, because this issue is important to all Queenslanders.

We also see the minister blaming the courts for releasing serious sex offenders when it is this government which creates the legislation that the judicial system works with. We also hear blame for police numbers going to federal agencies such as the airport and so forth. But we do not hear blame when we mention the recruits and the retreads coming from interstate and overseas and when we draw from those

agencies. So we have to have a balance and get true information. It is time to stop the blame game and support the hardworking Police Service and their families.

Corrective Services also has crime prevention as one of its strategic goals, yet despite 10 years of Labor policy it has continued to maintain a prisoner return rate of almost 30 per cent. Community corrections also appear to have failed because there is an increase in the number of offenders returning to the management of Corrective Services, with figures jumping from 18 per cent in 1998-99 to 23 per cent in 2003-04.

The lack of funding is also reflected in the current state budget highlights for Police and Corrective Services which was put out by the minister. It stated—

This budget maintains the Government's focus on community safety ... and \$1.9 million on increasing the agency's management of dangerous sex offenders.

We know that there are 25 dangerous sex offenders at this time and there are projected to be 100 over the next three years. In the next paragraph the minister said—

... offender rehabilitation and this budget continues to invest in this crucial area by delivering \$18.3 million over the next four years for programs and initiatives to improve prisoners' personal skills—

So there is \$18.3 million over the whole of the prison system—

Time expired.