



Speech by

Hon. Judy Spence

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Police Resources

Hon. JC SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Police and Corrective Services) (9.59 am): The Premier has outlined to the parliament this morning the extra resources that this government will provide to help policing in remote Indigenous communities in Queensland. I am pleased with the progress made in yesterday's talks with both police unions and police. This government is committed to providing a safe environment for Queensland's police officers, no matter where they are based.

The unacceptably high levels of violence in Aboriginal communities makes the job of policing these communities harder than policing in the rest of Queensland. It is a sad indictment of these Aboriginal communities that, despite the police to population ratios being higher than almost any other community in Australia, the levels of violence are such that the Police Union still wants to reduce these ratios further with more police to deal with rampant violence.

As the Premier said this morning, the statewide police to population ratio is one to 438 but it is as high as one to 112 in Kowanyama, one to 124 in Doomadgee and one to 130 in Aurukun. The commissioner has decided to put extra police in Kowanyama, Bamaga and Aurukun. The Police Union yesterday called for more police in two-officer stations such as Hope Vale, Pormpuraaw, Lockhart River and Wujal Wujal to deal with communities, some of which only have a few hundred people.

We will look at this further because, as the baseline indicator report demonstrated yesterday, the levels of violence within these communities is far too great. I will continue to discuss this with the police commissioner but, at the end of the day, it is the commissioner who allocates staff.

On Monday I will be joining a meeting with the DOGIT community mayors that the Premier has convened. I will be travelling to the cape and visiting Lockhart River, Bamaga, Aurukun, Kowanyama, Pormpuraaw and Thursday Island next week. The Premier and I have invited both police unions to attend. The level of violence in these areas is far too great.

While police are not scared to work in these communities, police contend that they can be in fear of their lives when riots break out and that is why they are asking for more officers. We have decided to establish a working party to review staffing numbers in Aboriginal communities. Both police unions are being invited to be part of this working party. I see this as a critical move forward in determining what additional police resources may be required in these communities.

These decisions taken yesterday are about improving conditions in police stations and areas of custody for both police officers, and the people they take into custody. It is about achieving greater safety for police officers who may find themselves in situations in the future where their actions are questioned.