



Speech by

Lawrence Springborg

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Hansard Wednesday, 14 November 2007

LAW AND ORDER

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (6.17 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the shadow Attorney-General. This government has a lot to answer for when it comes to the issue of handling crime, particularly serious crime in Queensland. We heard earlier tonight from the police minister that she will bring into this place tomorrow a police statistics report which she will boast about. There is no doubt that certain categories of crime in this report will have continued to fall over a period of time and that other levels of crime will have continued to be very, very serious and at alarming levels and they may in fact have risen.

One thing that this government needs to understand when dealing with property crime is that good economic times will often drive the level of property crime down because we do not have the level of destitution and despair in the community. However, when it comes to the issue of violent crime and drug crime in Queensland, this government's record is very, very suboptimal. This government's record in that area leaves a lot to be desired. They are the areas that I want to talk about tonight.

Let us go back in history and look at this state. Let us look at what this government and the relevant minister did on 23 March 1999. The government voted in this place against the introduction of drug courts—something which was advocated by the coalition in this place—because it was something which was suggested by the then coalition. The government came in here completely petulant and in a non-bipartisan manner and voted against it.

Eight months later Matt Foley came into this place and claimed it as his own idea when he introduced drug courts into Queensland. He did exactly the same thing on legislation which I introduced in this place to help law enforcement authorities in Queensland confiscate criminals' ill-gotten gains through the confiscation of criminal assets legislation. He came into this place and voted against my legislation and then introduced it as his own. That is the level of commitment that we see from this government. It is not prepared to act in time to deal with certain issues.

The other day we saw the shadow Attorney-General flesh figures out of this government which showed appalling levels of crime in the area of drug offences. This government and the courts do not take drug offending in this state seriously. We have a series of legislative provisions which in no way reflects the seriousness of these crimes. We heard this week that the government is going to introduce a whole range of new maximum sentences. Maximum sentences are not the answer. A minimum sentencing regime is the answer—that is, if you peddle in drugs in Queensland, if you are a drug trafficker, if you are a drug dealer, you are going to go to jail for a very long time. You are not going to be exonerated by the courts. The government has a very weak-on-drugs approach. The rule should be: you are going to jail.

Let us look at this government's record on serious sex offenders in this state. For years and years a former Attorney-General, Mr Foley, rallied against calls by the coalition to introduce monitoring regimes and stricter release mechanisms for sex offenders in Queensland, particularly child sex offenders. Then the government was forced through a process of public pressure and opposition pressure to introduce new laws which enabled these people to be kept longer and monitored more in the community. But the government even keeps bungling that.

What did we see from the minister for police recently in the case of the release of Mr Fardon? She said that he was going to be watched like a hawk. I can tell the House that there was another infamous paedophile who was released a couple of years ago in Queensland about whom she said exactly the same thing and we know what happened in that case. It cannot be mentioned yet—and the minister knows this—but that paedophile was not watched closely, to the detriment of Queenslanders.

This government is throwing spin at this problem. When it comes to child sex offenders in Queensland, the government should be enacting laws that lock them away. We need strong underlying minimum sentences in Queensland where they stay in jail for a very long period of time. As a part of that sentencing regime, like they do in Britain, they should stay there until they can demonstrate to the community that they are no longer a risk to the community. We have a government which invokes the normal spin cycle of the Labor Party when it comes to dealing with crime in Queensland. It does not actually do anything concrete about dealing with the issue of serious crime in this state. Whilst we recognise crime has decreased in Queensland in some categories, the important areas of drugs and sexual offences crime continue to remain at very alarming levels.

Time expired.