



Speech by

Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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GPS MONITORING OF SEX OFFENDERS; GOLD COAST, POLICE RESOURCES

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (9.44 pm): This Labor government releases dangerous sex offenders back into community in secret and has chosen the cheap option when it comes to monitoring them. The Queensland coalition will continue to pursue the best form of electronic monitoring of those sex offenders, which is the global positioning system.

In making her bizarre statement this morning, the minister is obviously still embarrassed by an incident in which a child rapist, a dangerous sex offender who was supposed to be confined to his home at night, was allowed to roam free and undetected for 18 hours before being picked up by police. If this Beattie Labor government is going to let dangerous sex offenders out of jail, it needs to know where they are at all times, and not just whether or not they are at home as is the case with its inferior radio frequency tracking devices.

In her example this morning the minister failed to realise that the New Zealand trial only used the passive GPS system that allows prisoner movements to be tracked on a daily basis when information is downloaded, rather than the active monitoring option which can give location updates every five to 10 minutes. The minister is wrong in claiming there was no active real-time monitoring of sexual offenders, with both the Minnesota and Florida Department of Corrections successfully using live-tracking GPS devices. This means that authorities are alerted almost immediately if an offender is not complying. This government is soft on dangerous sex offenders and has chosen the cheap option when it comes to monitoring them.

The disturbing revelation that police were unable to respond to an emergency call from a home where a teenager allegedly later murdered his mother highlights the Gold Coast's desperate need for more police resources and staff. It is appropriate for the police commissioner to launch an inquiry into the incident, but the Gold Coast district's front-line police staffing levels also need to be examined.

Officially the Gold Coast has nine police stations and approximately 688 police to look after a permanent population of around 500,000. That makes an official police to population ratio of only 1 to 720 while the state's average is 1 to 340. However, what about the police officers on sick, long service or maternity leave? What about the police officers who are absent because they are training or on promotion boards? How many tourists visit the Gold Coast each day? 60,000 or more.

It is no wonder that Police Union representative Dennis Fitzpatrick has said that there are nowhere near enough police on the ground in first response on the Gold Coast and in most other places in Queensland. The situation on the Gold Coast is critical. It is time that the minister came clean on the real number of police on the Gold Coast and throughout Queensland. It is time that the police minister stopped denying the staffing crisis in the Queensland Police Service.

Time expired.

