



Speech by

## Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Wednesday, 24 March 2010

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### SUNSHINE COAST HINTERLAND, POLICE RESOURCES

**Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (10.06 pm): Last sitting week I put a question on notice to the Minister for Police. I asked the minister to detail the decision-making processes around the allocation of police officers, particularly for communities like Maleny, Palmwoods and Woodford in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. I and many in those communities are increasingly concerned about the expectations being placed on two-officer police units such as those based in Maleny, Palmwoods and Woodford. Let me use Maleny and Woodford as examples. Officers posted at those two stations are being tasked with a multitude of duties—monitoring traffic infringements and issuing fines, monitoring trail bike usage, attending domestic disputes, graffiti and vandalism, attending vehicle accidents and drug raids, providing traffic control services in the event of emergencies or helicopter retrievals, and community engagement. And that is not even to mention the endless paperwork.

As if that is not enough, one must take into consideration the large geographic catchment these officers must cover. In Maleny's case, the officers can be called to events throughout the Blackall Range and the Upper Mary Valley, and indeed they are. Late last year there was a serious complication with a road closure on Postmans Track just south of Conondale. Over a period of a week the officers from Maleny were tied up interacting with residents and council staff on site—a remote site for the hinterland and some 20 minutes at best from the Maleny township. For every minute they were tied up there, the closest police officer to Maleny would have actually been at Landsborough, even then some 15 minutes off the range. That raises serious safety concerns for residents in the broader Maleny community. What sort of response times will result? Will the police be there when the community needs them?

But there is more at stake here than the safety and security of residents. We must also consider the health and wellbeing of the police officers themselves. The type of work, the amount of work, the hours of work and the travel involved would place stress and strain on the best of us. Police officers are no different. But we do not want this stress and strain on our police officers. We want them to be alert, prepared, ready to act. We need them to be alert, prepared, ready to act. Tired and strained police officers are like tired and strained paramedics, doctors and nurses. It is simply unfair and downright dangerous to place such important members of the community who hold such significant responsibilities under that kind of pressure.

So I look forward to receiving the minister's response to my question on notice. I look forward to reading his explanations as to how staffing decisions are made for communities such as these. Ultimately, though, I look forward to the minister giving consideration to the needs of those communities and, more importantly, the needs of the current police officers in those communities. Ultimately, it is my request that the number of officers in those communities be increased—and sooner rather than later.