



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Hansard Tuesday, 26 October 2010

POLICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr KNUTH (Dalrymple—LNP) (3.59 pm): The hallmark of 12 years of this Labor government is a court system that is overburdened, police officers who are overworked and a justice system that is overly lenient on criminals who commit serious crime. I welcome any move to free up the courts by introducing ticketing for public nuisance offences.

A Griffith University trial of the ticketing system found that 46 per cent of public nuisance offenders were first-time offenders and that people who had no criminal history and who happened to have a bad night out were overloading our court system. This legislation will unburden our congested court system from having to process the almost 1,000 public nuisance offences a day that officers across this state have to deal with. However, this legislation does not address the greater need for legislation that will protect those officers who will be responsible for enforcing the ticket system from members of the public who show a complete disrespect for those who enforce the rule of law in this state.

Our police officers are already overworked and are now being investigated for minor infractions. Yet this government continues to reject the need for greater protection for our officers through mandatory minimum sentencing to deter serious assaults on our police. The introduction of the ticketing system for public nuisance offences will improve the workload efficiencies of the courts and the Police Service. The deficiency in this legislation is that police officers will now be required to issue on-the-spot fines without the protection of mandatory minimum sentencing, deterring those who may respond in a violent manner.

It is vital that this government starts to acknowledge that it is not only the paperwork and the court time that is putting pressure on police officers but also the unnecessarily high risk of violent assault that they face in the course of their work. These men and women do an incredible job in protecting the public. They work long hours and are often unable to take holidays because of the recruitment crisis that is faced by the profession. That recruitment crisis can be attributed to the witch-hunt that we see daily in our media and the excessive risk of violent assault that this government has decided should be all in a day's work for our police officers.

The need for more police is vitally important in townships like Moranbah, which is experiencing a massive expansion owing to the growth of the mining industry in that area. I say to the minister for police that Moranbah needs more police and better accommodation to attract police to go there. A lot of crime is not reported in that area because people believe that it is a waste of time reporting it as there are not enough police on the job there. We need to do something about the police numbers in that mining town. I bring this matter to the attention of the minister right now and I will put it in writing as well. I wanted to bring those issues to the attention of the House.