




Speech by
Bill Byrne

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

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POLICE SERVICE, FIREARMS

 **Mr BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (9.54 pm): I recently participated in the estimates process as part of the portfolio committees. It was indeed unfortunate that I was undercut in my capacity to genuinely test some of the ministers. The good news is that I now have many questions put together for relevant ministers based on the information prepared for estimates. It was quite incredible for me and for many in the gallery to watch the performance of Minister Dempsey. I am not sure whether the minister set a world record for a 21-minute read reply to a question that required a yes-or-no answer, but it was a tactic chosen in order to protect the minister from any serious scrutiny.

Let's start that process now. Here are some of the questions that I would have asked if we had been permitted. Today I would particularly like to address the clearly problematic issue of police firearms training and competence. I submit that nobody in this parliament knows more about small arms training and standards than I do. So it is from that basis of some knowledge that I am able to comment on the matter.

I specifically wanted to ask the minister how many times in the last two years have the Queensland Police Service experienced unauthorised weapon discharges or incidents of the use of weapons outside the guidelines dictated. I would suggest that shooting at moving vehicles is one such breach. I wanted to ask how much night-firing training do police undertake. I would have asked the minister what standards are applied to a trained officer in order to ensure that they are mission ready to step out on to the street. I would have asked what was the failure rate on the first attempt at qualification. I would have asked what is the retesting schedule for failures. I wanted to ask how often are police weapons inspected by armourers so as to ensure technical safety. I wanted to ask what systems are in place in police stations to account for ammunition on a daily basis. I wanted to ask what are the consequences for an officer who loses ammunition. I wanted to ask if it is true that officers can go 23 months without having to requalify on their weapons.

The parliament will be thrilled to hear that my concerns were perfectly represented by a *Sunday Mail* article, where Sergeant Matt Russell was quoted as saying the police were hesitant, incorrect and even scared during training because of lack of practice. Are there any surprises there? It would seem patently obvious to anyone who understands the use of firearms as a tool of trade in a life-threatening environment that the sergeant's comments are an indisputable function of logic, and this rests on the minister's head.