




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 29 October 2014

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Community Safety

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.38 pm): A strong part of the government's plan to revitalise front-line services and make Queensland the safest place to raise a family is, of course, to ensure that Queenslanders have access to justice through the expansion of our courts and coronial services and the provision of funding to legal services to reach those most in need. Queensland also expect strong laws to deter criminals.

On that note, I look up to the gallery and I welcome to the gallery a group that keep communities safe on the Sunshine Coast. I see members of the Residents Association South Sunshine Coast, who for years have campaigned to keep communities safe with CCTV cameras. So I welcome them to the House.

Just last week, after honouring the Chief Judge for 15 years of service as head of the District Court, I announced five new appointments to the District Court. Among those appointments I announced the appointment of an additional District Court judge for the Cairns region. His Honour Judge Dean Morzone QC will be appointed as a judge of the District Court from 27 October and will commence serving on the bench in Cairns very shortly.

To accommodate the continued increase in demand for coronial services, an additional full-time coroner covering the Central Queensland region was appointed in August 2012. The reporting of new deaths to this position commenced on 1 October 2012. Prior to the appointment of this full-time central coroner, 70 per cent of reportable deaths were reported to six full-time coroners situated in Brisbane, Southport and Cairns. The remaining 30 per cent of deaths were reported to local magistrate coroners in 16 Magistrates Courts across the state. The appointment of the central coroner enabled the full-time coroner model to be extended state-wide from 1 October 2012.

We appointed an additional three magistrates to the magistracy. These appointments have resulted in the Magistrates Court more adequately managing the workloads. The clearance rates for the courts in the 2013-14 financial year was 95.4 per cent for criminal matters and 97.9 per cent for civil matters. To ensure that vulnerable Queenslanders are able to have their legal needs met, the government made a \$100 million investment into the legal service sector to ensure the delivery of legal advice, legal profession regulation and law library services. Over the next 12 months Legal Aid will receive \$64.4 million to continue its valuable work in assisting economically and socially disadvantaged people across the state. Another \$30 million will be invested in a range of other community organisations over the next three years to provide free or low-cost legal assistance services.

As a result of our review of the LPITAF process, community organisations, including community legal centres, predict an additional 6,000 front-line services can be delivered to vulnerable people in 2014-17. Recently the Premier commissioned a special task force to review how to best prevent and

respond to domestic violence in Queensland. At the same time, the government committed to investing an additional \$250,000 per annum in 2015-17 in the services delivered by the Women's Legal Service. The additional investment will enable the Women's Legal Service to continue to deliver vital front-line services including the dedicated rural, remote and regional telephone advice service one day a week, the domestic violence duty lawyer clinic at the Holland Park Magistrates Court one day a week and evening legal advice at the Women's Legal Service head office two days per week. Again, it was completely underfunded in the 15 years the Labor government was in power.

In relation to our justice of the peace trial program where we have JPs hearing minor civil disputes in QCAT, I can report to honourable members today that we have now had over 4,000 matters heard by JPs—community champions in this state. Over 4,000 matters have been heard by JPs in five trial sites in Queensland. That has meant that the time vulnerable Queenslanders have had to wait for minor civil disputes to be dealt with has been reduced from six weeks 12 months ago to now just under three weeks. This is a revitalisation of front-line services, a revitalisation of the JP branch, which was completely neglected by the member for Bundamba when she was head of the JP branch some years ago.

Whether it be in our courts, our JPs in our community, our boot camps sorting young lives out, reducing crime in the state or whether it be the strongest laws in the country dealing with criminal gangs, this government has a strong plan for all Queenslanders. We want to ensure that all Queenslanders have a bright future that will make Queensland the safest place to live, work and raise a family.