




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, Report

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (2.55 pm): Whilst there was a bit of a protection racket running on the day, we did find out some things in the estimates process. We found out that crime is up in Queensland and, lo and behold, the Police budget is down. Who would have thought those two things would correlate? We also found out that the number of police is dropping as a percentage of population. That is a concern because one would expect that, with the growth in the Public Service of some 20,000-plus, they might have been able to employ a few more police so that at the very least we keep pace with the population growth in Queensland.

When the LNP were in government we showed our priority and our respect for the police force and law enforcement by the percentage of our overall budget that we allocated. Compare that to what the Labor Party is doing currently with the percentage of the overall budget it is allocating. The difference in the two numbers is \$137 million a year. The police are down \$137 million a year as a proportion of the overall budget. The minister can come in here and say, 'We are doing this, we have bought this and we have done that.' The simple facts are that if police and the safety of the citizens of Queensland were a priority for this government they would make it a priority and allocate an appropriate budget. We are in a situation where \$137 million has gone missing. The numbers do not lie. They were confirmed on the day. It is easy to come in here and suggest that 'we have bought this for the police' and 'we have done that for the police'. The simple facts are that there is less money as a proportion of the overall budget for police than there was when the LNP were in government and there are fewer police as an overall percentage of the population. Those are the two simple facts.

Much more disturbingly than that, we find that the Annual Statistical Review from 2016-17 shows that armed robbery is up 24 per cent. This is the consequence of not prioritising law and order in Queensland and not giving it the budget that it needs and deserves. Assaults are up 11 per cent. Unlawful entry—these are people sneaking into your house or sneaking into your business and taking things—is up 12 per cent. People are not safe in their own homes in Queensland because it is not a priority for this government to allocate money to law and order. Unlawful use of a motor vehicle is up 19 per cent. These are outrageous figures.

Not only is their budget down \$137 million in comparison to the LNP; in comparison to their own budget last year, which was a cut, it is down \$44.6 million. How on earth can this be a priority? Time is short. These are the facts that were discovered with regard to the QPS. I respect both the service and the hardworking men and women on the thin blue line, and I do not want to see it get any thinner, which is exactly what is happening under Labor.

When we go to prisons, we find that prisons are currently operating on 131 per cent of capacity. The problem with that is that prisoners cannot be rehabilitated. We have double-bunking all over the system but we have not increased the opportunities for industry, employment and education. What it

means is that prisoners are less likely to be rehabilitated effectively. The problem with not being rehabilitated effectively and being put into a more violent situation is that there is more of a chance of committing a crime when they get out than there was previously.

What we also know from the minister's own admission is that we will have all the extra spending and all the solutions, but the best-case scenario is that our prisons will be 123 per cent over capacity. This is not good enough. Our community deserves to be safe and we deserve to have our criminals rehabilitated. It is called corrective services, and we need to correct people's behaviour. This means we need to get rehabilitation into prisons to make sure people have opportunities to find a job and become a taxpayer when they get out. What we find is that our prisons are overcrowded and violent, which is causing problems with safety in the community, and that our police have had a budget cut and crime is up across Queensland. It is a really simple equation—allocate more money in next year's budget.

(Time expired)