




Speech By
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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Police Resources

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (2.34 pm): Let me be clear: under the Palaszczuk Labor government, the police budget is down and crime is up. The government's No. 1 priority should be to keep its citizens safe, but the Palaszczuk government are failing miserably. Unfortunately, on that basic measure, they cannot deliver. This year alone we have seen a budget cut of \$44.6 million, which is \$8.3 million from the road safety budget and \$36.3 million from the crime and public order budget. I ask you, Mr Deputy Speaker Stewart: how is public order and crime going in Townsville? We know for sure that it is going poorly, and this minister's response is to do nothing apart from talk about the numbers that do not exist.

We have an embattled police minister who cannot get his facts straight about the police numbers on the Gold Coast. Take the recent example where the Premier was asked a question on notice on 18 October about a decline in Gold Coast police numbers. The Premier's response was that there were 842 police officers on the Gold Coast, indicating a cut of 44 officers. Later that day, the Minister for Police revealed that the number of FTE officers was 856.65. Following that, the Minister for Police then reported that the number of police officers was over 1,000, which would include specialist squads that are centralised.

What we find as we look at these numbers is that the minister is hiding. He will not front up and he does not have a clue as to the exact numbers on the Gold Coast and in other areas. How can Queenslanders have faith in law and order if the minister cannot get something so simple correct? The police minister regularly hides behind a claim that issues are an operational matter, despite legislation clearly outlining his ability to receive reports and direct the commissioner about issues, including policy and priorities to be pursued and the number and deployment of officers. I will say that again: the number and deployment of officers. Turning around and saying, 'The Gold Coast doesn't need more officers. It's not my fault. It's an operational matter,' is clearly not correct.

The minister is the minister. He is the minister who is supposed to run the Queensland Police Service, and the buck stops with him. If crime is going up, then he needs to go back to the Cabinet Budget Review Committee and get some more money to increase the funding and increase the number of police. He needs to keep his election commitments, which have been broken all over the state. It is patently obvious that he is out of his depth and he cannot keep Queenslanders safe.

Let us have a look at some crime statistics from different regions. On the Gold Coast, common assault has skyrocketed 126 per cent. How do you feel walking down the street? In Mackay, robbery is up 216 per cent. In the Far North, unlawful use of a motor vehicle is up 52 per cent. In south Brisbane, rape and attempted rape is up 47 per cent. In north Brisbane, vehicle theft is up 30 per cent.

What else is going on in Queensland under this incompetent minister? We have found that the bikies are back. Labor's bikie laws have clearly failed. Under Labor, more and more bikies have emerged across the state. There are now 28 bikie gangs declared as identified organisations, which

certainly suggests they do not have the bikies under control. We could ask the people in the electorate of Kawana if the bikies are under control, because there was a recent shooting there by bikies in broad daylight.

This is not the Queensland that I moved to in 1989. This is not the Queensland that we all want and deserve. We all pay our taxes—increasing taxes at that—and the priority should be the safety of our community. If Labor cannot keep the community safe, then they should not be in government in Queensland. Why is the budget being cut while crime is going up? We need to address this as a matter of urgency for the people of the Gold Coast and the people of Townsville—the people across the entirety of Queensland. The officers that were promised coming into the election should now be delivered. Even in my area, there were new police officers promised but the numbers have not increased. The numbers have not gone up. What we find all across the state is that police numbers are not keeping pace with population growth. The budget is down and crime is up.