



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, Report

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.13 pm): A budget is about a government setting its priorities. We have seen from this government more tax, more debt, more waste, fewer jobs and less infrastructure. In terms of the Police Service, what we see is a little more worrying. We know that, under the LNP, 4.39 per cent of the budget was allocated to law and order. That was because the LNP is serious about law and order. Under the Labor government, 3.98 per cent of the budget is allocated to law and order. That does not seem like a big difference until we calculate the difference in terms of the budget figures. That shows a shortfall per annum of \$234 million. I will say that again. The shortfall in not maintaining the budget at the level the LNP had for the Police Service is \$234 million a year. In the five years of this Palaszczuk government, which supposedly prioritises law and order, \$1,173 million has not been spent on the Police Service. In fact, this government has reduced its law and order priority.

Of course, that is why the crime statistics in this state have gone up. In Townsville, there has been a 113 per cent increase in the number of robberies. The people of that area are crying out for extra police. At the last election, they were promised 53. Two years later, we do not see any evidence of that. In fact, when the LNP was in government, there were 245 officers per 100,000 Queenslanders. There are now 233 officers per 100,000 Queenslanders. Twelve may not seem a big number but, when it is multiplied to correlate with the population number, as we should, we find that we are 610 officers down.

The minister can come in here and talk about record budgets. There are records being set in terms of debt and tax. He should not be very proud of those increases. After he banged his hand on the cabinet table, he walked away with empty pockets and those Queenslanders on the thin blue line are the ones who are paying the price. When our officers, who are stressed and overworked, ask themselves why they are working so hard and making so little progress, I ask them to consider where that billion dollars is. I ask them to consider where the 610 additional police officers could be deployed.

There was a promise made about an extra 535 officers over a four-year period. If the government were on track with that promise, we would now have 260-odd additional police but, so far over the term of this government, we have seen 131 additional police. The government is well short of reaching its target of 535. I suspect that is because the budget was cut last year and the police department had to go over budget to keep things rolling.

We are \$1 billion short, 610 officers short, the crime statistics are up and the minister's solution for all of this is to go back to the cabinet table and lose again. Clearly, the Palaszczuk government is too weak to give the minister what he needs to be able to do the job in the Police Service. He needs the extra money—\$234 million a year—and he needs the extra police officers, the 610. That is what is missing and that is why the crime statistics are up. Queenslanders need to know about that.

During the estimates committee hearing in relation to corrective services it was revealed that overcrowding still poses a significant challenge for the commissioner. The commissioner is going to have a significant change to legislation and regulation. Fundamentally, corrective services will have to alter its practices to be able to deal with the Human Rights Act, which commences in January 2020. We know that this act is going to be a problem. In that regard, we are expecting to see some legislation introduced. The prisons are in enough trouble as they are. They are overcrowded. We have had the Flaxton report refer to corruption. We look forward to the additional accommodation being provided in our prisons, but double bunking is no answer. It is leading to corruption and a chaotic environment for our corrective services.

(Time expired)