




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 25 October 2022

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Law and Order

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.54 pm): ‘Queenslanders have entrusted us with providing principled and stable government, and delivering on the promises we made.’ Those words should be very familiar to the Premier and the police minister because they are words from the minister’s charter letter dated 1 December 2020. Today, less than two years later, at least one of those promises has been broken. I quote again from the minister’s charter letter—

Oversee the Government’s commitment to recruit over five years from 1 July 2020 an additional 2,025 frontline police officers and police personnel ...

We now know that that commitment is in tatters, with the minister this week walking away from that commitment. Back in 2020 at the estimates hearings there was a plan to honour that promise. Then Deputy Commissioner Smith advised that in the 2021-22 financial year we would see a net increase of 180 officers. In fact, it was described by the deputy commissioner as—

... about 330 for the attrition in that financial year coming up, plus 180.

What we actually got was five—yes, five. The government’s own budget documents show that in the 2021-22 financial year there was a net increase of five full-time-equivalent police officers in this state. The then police commissioner, when questioned further, explained that the data used in the government’s own budget documents is incredibly inaccurate and that the headcount had increased by 143. That is still well short of the promised 180, but over the last few days we have learnt that this government is failing to recruit police officers in the numbers that it needs to meet its targets. When the media started to ask the questions, the minister suddenly waived some fees and said, ‘We certainly met our targets in years 1 and 2.’ No, Minister, you did not meet your target in year 2: 180 extra officers were promised; the budget documents show a net increase of five while the commissioner claims 143. Either way, this government is falling well short of its target. But it is not just recruitment where this minister is failing. When it comes to attrition, in the last financial year we saw the attrition of police officers 40 per cent above what was estimated. Is it any wonder that our police officers are leaving in droves? One only has to look at areas around Queensland to see that, under this government, they are fighting a losing battle.

While our police officers are being stretched beyond breaking point, the police minister fails to request a briefing on the failings of the DNA lab. We have a crime crisis in this state and this police minister is not up to the task. Queenslanders in Townsville described yesterday’s incident involving juvenile offenders as chaos and expressed their fears for the safety of their four-year-old daughter. It is Queenslanders on Bribie Island who say break-ins, car thefts and property damage are now occurring on a daily basis. It is Queenslanders in Cairns whose city has seen over 1,000 vehicles stolen so far this year, and it is Queenslanders in Hervey Bay and Toowoomba who are living in fear.

I will put it on the record. I will brief the minister right here, right now: Minister, it is your broken promises that have seen unlawful use of a motor vehicle charges against juvenile offenders increase by almost seven times in the last seven years in the Darling Downs police district. What does that equate to? Six hundred per cent. Members in this House need to get their heads around that figure—600 per cent in seven years in that district. It is your broken promises that have seen robbery charges against juveniles in the Townsville police district increase by 480 per cent in seven years. It is your broken promises that have seen unlawful entry offences against juveniles in the Cairns district increase by 72 per cent in the year to the end of September. It is your broken promises that have seen robbery offences against juveniles in the Wide Bay-Burnett police district almost double in the last 12 months. Queenslanders deserve to feel safe in their homes. They deserve to know that when a promise is made it will be honoured. They deserve to know that perpetrators will be brought to justice. Under this minister, Queenslanders have none of those things and this minister needs to step up and start delivering for this state when it comes to law and order.