

**Question on Notice
No. 601
Asked on 18 April 2007**

MR DEMPSEY asked the Minister for Police and Corrective Services (MS SPENCE)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the recent closure of the domestic violence unit at Bundaberg Police Station, which had been operating for over three years and had identified that over a third of all assaults in the Bundaberg district were a result of domestic violence and as this unit was working tirelessly and effectively to reduce the incidence of domestic violence for the benefit of the local community-

- (1) Why has this successful unit been closed?
- (2) When is it likely to be re-opened?
- (3) What alternatives are in place to tackle domestic violence problems and protect women and families in the Bundaberg district?

ANSWER:

I am advised by Police the Bundaberg Police District Domestic Violence Unit has not been closed.

Any level of domestic violence is unacceptable and that those subjected to it should receive the maximum protection from any further domestic violence. However, I am informed by police the Member has erred in regard to his assertions of the level of domestic violence-related assaults in Bundaberg.

An analysis of all assaults in the Bundaberg Police District indicates that domestic violence was related to:

- 24% of all assaults in 2004-05;
- 19% in 2005-06; and
- 12% during the 2006-07 year to date.

This reflects the proactive approach police have combating this serious issue. Bundaberg District Domestic Violence Unit (the Unit) was established to improve police responses and investigations of reports of domestic violence and providing extra support to victims of domestic violence at court proceedings.

The Unit has achieved its goals and domestic violence servicing is more consistent in Bundaberg. As a result the QPS has decided to re-evaluate staffing levels as a result of the improved servicing co-ordination.

As a result of the trial, the permanent position of a Bundaberg District Domestic Violence Liaison Officer has now been created and will coordinate domestic violence services at a whole-of-district level.

This position will ensure that domestic violence issues continue to be better coordinated across the entire district by a permanent, dedicated officer.

The Beattie Government is determined to work with Queensland families and communities to overcome this distressing problem and thereby save lives, save families and create safe environments for women and children. That is why we are constantly reviewing our programs and policies, our legislation and our services.

Victims of domestic violence are more often, but not always, women. The Queensland Police Service responds and provides assistance to people of any age or gender that fall within the legislative ambit of being a victim or connected to a victim of domestic violence. Children often witness acts of domestic violence being committed upon people with whom they regularly reside.

All operational police in the Bundaberg District are trained in responding to domestic violence incidents providing effective service delivery in this area of responsibility. A police officer is obligated to create a crime report regarding the presence of children at a domestic violence incident, including unborn children. If children are hurt, or at risk of harm, police officers will respond appropriately, including contacting the Department of Child Safety.

The Bundaberg Police District continues to use the Domestic Violence Referral initiative created in 2003 as an alternative strategy to address domestic violence within the community. This initiative provides the opportunity for referral of all parties, victim and perpetrator, to external agencies for professional intervention, guidance, counselling and support.

The Bundaberg Police District also reviews 'repeat calls for service'. This case management strategy assists in the identification of underlying issues and the implementation of various types of assistance for families.

The permanent appointment of the District Domestic Violence Police Officer will provide direction, guidance and advice to officers regarding the Queensland Police Service response to domestic violence incidents. Relationships will be nurtured with the community and other government and non-government agencies to develop initiatives, referral networks and preventative strategies for dealing with the complex issues associated with domestic violence.