



Speech by
Glen Elmes

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard Tuesday, 30 October 2007

NOOSA ELECTORATE, PERSONAL SAFETY

Mr ELMES (Noosa—Lib) (10.17 pm): I would like to make a contribution on behalf of all of the residents of the Sunshine Coast, which of course includes the Noosa electorate. The decline in personal and residential safety due to the growth in violence brought about by alcohol and drug abuse can no longer be tolerated. Street fights, gang violence, vandalism, hooning and, to use the Premier's expression, 'lewd behaviour' must be stamped out.

In the past two decades we have seen unprecedented changes to family life, and it appears that these changes encompass rising incidents of violence. It occurs in and around licensed premises, in entertainment precincts, in public places such as parks and shopping centres and also through increasing road rage, in arguments between neighbours, in conflict between gangs or groups of people and in the workplace and schools.

Our police and welfare agencies are becoming overloaded with cries for help and assistance. My office is receiving an ever-increasing number of calls from concerned residents, taxidriviers and late-night workers who have been observers or victims of crime, and I speak with these constituents on a daily basis.

Recently the Premier commented on the lewd and disgusting behaviour she had personally witnessed at the Gold Coast Indy. All that many people on the Sunshine Coast have to do is look outside their front door on any weekend night and this disgraceful conduct is happening before their eyes.

We must develop initiatives to deal with violence and antisocial behaviour and foster a culture of safety within our community. So how do we tackle this? It is not just about police numbers and it is not just about tougher sentencing in the courts. Violence is a community problem that requires a community solution.

We are in danger of losing control of our streets on Friday and Saturday nights, and this will not improve with the creation on the Sunshine Coast of a task force of eight police, probably reassigned from other duties, who have to deal with crowds of between 100 and 200 out-of-control youths. The police minister is on record saying that the tactical crime squad based at Kawana was set up for this purpose. What happened to it or is this eight-person squad simply a new marketing diversion?

We must accept that parents need to take greater responsibility. We must demand that owners and managers of licensed premises undertake a greater duty of care to their patrons. We must insist that those administering the liquor licensing laws ensure a vastly increased allocation of staff to supervise licensed premises during the range of hours that they are open. The recruitment of additional police numbers and retention of those already in the force is another absolute must, and that must be done so they are in a better place to protect the community at night and in the early hours of the morning when they are most needed.

As a society our rights as individuals are based on a shared sense of responsibility to others, to our families and to our communities. The first obligation of any government is the protection of its citizens, and it is about time that this Labor government took that responsibility seriously.