



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

Motions

22 August 2019

WALLSEND CRIME

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (12:23):

I move:

That this House:

(1)Notes a recent spike in Wallsend petty crime.

(2)A strong sense in the community that a permanent police presence is needed.

(3)Urges the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to find a permanent solution to this cyclical problem.

In early April a worried Maryland constituent sent me a message on Facebook. Her family had gone out for the evening and had come home to find a group of hooligans had broken into their home and were in the midst of robbing the house. Her husband detained one of the young men at the scene while they waited for the police to respond. I am happy to report that another of the alleged perpetrators was caught by responding officers a short time later. The constituent's son, who has special needs, has not been comfortable in the house since, and she too is feeling unsafe in her home.

This is only one of the most egregious criminal incidents that are occurring in the suburbs of Wallsend, Maryland, Fletcher and Minmi over the past few months. Those suburbs have seen a huge spike in criminal activity with offences such as thefts from motor vehicles, stolen cars and home break and enters. On 3 April the Newcastle City Police District posted on Facebook a

warning that cars in Maryland, Fletcher, Minmi and Black Hill had been subjected to an increased number of break-ins over the previous week. Understandably, the community is feeling very unsafe. Joseph from Fletcher said:

I know people ... have had a gut full of these grubs going around and breaking into houses and cars. No wonder people are talking about taking matters into their own hands. We had an incident on Wednesday night where police were called to attend regarding grubs looking in vehicles with torches. It took police an hour and twenty-five minutes to attend. How do I know this? It was my wife who called them.

I know that Newcastle police are doing the very best they can. In response to the increased car break-ins at the beginning of April, police canvassed the neighbourhood and collected CCTV footage. On social media local responses were uniformly positive to this strategy. However, there is a strong sense amongst the community that only a permanent police presence in the western suburbs of Newcastle will provide the circuit-breaker we need. One Maryland resident said:

It's gotten beyond a joke out here. Not a day goes by where you don't hear about something that's gone wrong, someone's house has been broken into, someone's car has been gone through or has been keyed. I know the cops are doing their best, and when they come out to answer a call they're professional and responsive but something needs to change. We need there to be a stronger, more visible presence.

It is clear that the community supports the police and they respect them but they know that we need more. I have been encouraging victims of crime to report their experiences to the Police Assistance Line, but it has been my experience that crimes in Wallsend tend to be cyclical. There is a spate of crime, resources are allocated to deal with it, the crime stops and then the resources are withdrawn. Then the crime starts up again and the cycle repeats.

I have presented petitions to this House for debate, moved countless notices of motions, asked countless questions on notice, made speech after speech, and still this Government has not taken action. So I stand here today to make the case: Crime is a persistent problem in Wallsend and it is a problem that cannot be adequately addressed by police based in the eastern suburbs moving their already limited resources around to the western suburbs. We need a stronger police presence in the western suburbs of Newcastle. We need more cops on the beat in Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Hunter-Port Stephens.

The three local police districts that cover the Wallsend electorate have been given 16 new graduates from the next attestation. That is a good start but hardly makes up for eight years of neglect. All options need to be on the table and I am committed to working productively with the Government on this important matter. How can Wallsend residents and business owners feel safe

to invest in our community unless our community invests in them? I urge the police Minister to listen to the cries of our Wallsend community.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (12:52):

In reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Seven Hills, Shellharbour, Terrigal, Heffron and Castle Hill for their contributions. I congratulate the Government because the three speakers on its behalf did not mention Wallsend or the issues that I rose. I am not trying to be adversarial. It does not work and I do not believe in it. I want members to hear about the problems we are having with crime in Wallsend. The member for Seven Hills talked about the 17 crime categories. I know that Wallsend is a hot spot because the local area commanders have talked to me about that. I have followed the crime categories in Wallsend. We have problems in the town. I moved this motion not to complain or grumble, but to find a solution for the people in Wallsend who are feeling unsafe.

I am also disappointed that the Minister did not make the effort to walk downstairs, as a show of faith and gesture of goodwill, to listen to the concerns of the people of Wallsend. The member for Shellharbour made a good point. She said that the most important duty of a government is to keep people safe in every electorate. It is wonderful that the Gosford electorate is receiving a new \$3.5 million development. How does that relate to Wallsend? In the electorate of Wallsend each week our police station is open for four hours. When the Government was elected in 2011 a superstation at Glendale was budgeted and slated for. What happened to that money? It was taken away from my constituents. We do not have a police station.

It is fine for members to talk about how much is being spent on their electorates for their resources. That is wonderful because it helps the people of Gosford, but it does not help the people of Wallsend. We need a permanent solution to the spikes of crime in the western suburbs of Newcastle—this is a growth area because development is taking place on the old Yancoal and Xstrata land. We need the resources and infrastructure to ensure people feel safe. The member for Heffron spoke eloquently about the importance of victims being able to feel safe and the psychological impact when crime occurs. I am seeing this more and more in the Wallsend electorate and I want it to go away.

The only way to eradicate crime in my electorate is if we have a permanent police presence. I do not think any of the three local area commanders who cover the Wallsend area would disagree with me. But it is not their job to tell the Minister for Police and Emergency Services that we need more policing; it is mine and that is a problem. I am pleased that the member for Castle Hill talked about the PCYC in Blacktown. We do not have a PCYC in Wallsend. Again, I am not sure how that helps me or the people in Wallsend. I am disappointed that the Government has not really taken this motion seriously, because it is a serious concern to the people of Wallsend. I want all crime categories to be lowered in Wallsend and I need the Government's help. I will

work with the Government—I will work with everyone—on this issue to help the people of Wallsend. I urge members to support this sensible motion.