



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Notice

12 October 2017

WALLSEND ELECTORATE POLICING

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:18):

I move:

That this House:

(1)Notes that the Central Hunter Local Area Command received only two new probationary constables in the latest allocation of new recruits.

(2)Notes that crime in the Wallsend electorate is increasing.

(3)Calls on the Minister for Police to review how resource allocations are made to local area commands.

Residents of Wallsend are calling on the Minister for Police to say what he plans to do to reduce crime in our area. After two new officers were allocated to the Central Hunter Local Area Command in April, and no officers at all were allocated to the Newcastle Local Area Command in August, Wallsend residents are wondering when this Government will finally listen.

Our local police officers do an excellent job, but they are operating with limited resources. This news will not make things any better. Vast areas of the electorate of Wallsend are located far from the nearest police station. As a result, response times suffer, residents are concerned, and criminals can act with impunity.

In August, 226 new officers joined the NSW Police Force. A staggering 83 per cent of them were stationed in Sydney, with the rest of the State sharing the remaining 17 per cent. I have

lost count of the number of times I have stood in this Chamber and called for action to increase policing resources and to reduce crime in Wallsend. Beresfield and Tarro, which are serviced by the Central Hunter Local Area Command, provide a prime demonstration of the need for stronger policing. Crime in the area increased dramatically in the first months of this year. There was a 450 per cent increase in crime in January and February alone. Maree Miller, the president of Wallsend Neighbourhood Watch, stated:

Crime in the area is rising, particularly petty crime, and people won't report because they believe police won't come. There are only so many police, so they have to triage how they use their resources, but we need more police in the area, a stronger police presence with more resources.

Local policing is the issue most frequently raised with me every time I visit Beresfield and Tarro. That occurs across the electorate, but it is especially true in Beresfield and Tarro. Criminals in the Beresfield area know that police officers must travel 12 kilometres from Maitland or from as far away as Cessnock or Waratah to respond to an emergency call. The coordinator of the Beresfield-Tarro-Woodberry Neighbourhood Watch, Lloyd Frith, agrees, and stated:

The crime stats are through the roof in the Beresfield area and central policing does not work out here. It might work in Sydney, but the current system just isn't cutting it in our area. We need more police and local policing.

The local police station at Beresfield is open only one day a week, and locals have told me that it is consistently understaffed. In a situation where every second counts, a resident told me, "Criminals feel that they'll be able to get away with it because it might take the police 20 minutes to arrive." According to a constituent who phoned my office this morning, last night in Wallsend it took police 17 minutes to arrive at an emergency situation. Her husband was at work and she was at home with two young children when a man came to assault her next-door neighbour. She was on the line with officers at the Waratah police station throughout the incident, but it still took 17 minutes for police officers to arrive and to secure the situation. Despite this, the Government says the area is well resourced with police officers.

I invite the Minister for Police to accompany me next time I have a mobile office or a street stall in Beresfield or Taro. If he steps out of the Sydney basin he might understand how residents in Wallsend and Newcastle's western suburbs feel. I acknowledge the hard, dangerous work that our police officers do—day in and day out. They do their best to keep people safe, but the support they receive from this Government is not good enough. The residents of Wallsend and surrounding areas deserve much better. I call on the Minister for Police to review resource allocations. Wallsend expects better, we deserve better, and our police officers deserve better.