



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Private Members Statement

14 February 2018

WALLSEND ELECTORATE CRIME

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (18:39):

During the Christmas period, as many Wallsend residents travelled to be with their families, my office received more than 100 calls from residents about increased crime. An empty property behind my office had been torched, businesses had been vandalised and a rash of car break-ins worried residents. Many residents, particularly those in Wallsend, Maryland, Fletcher and Minmi, had prize possessions, family heirlooms and even Christmas presents stolen. I have never seen it so bad as it has been in the past 10 years. The level of calls, emails and messages was staggering. The Newcastle Herald reported:

Nelson Street florist Alyn Miranda said there was a feeling in Wallsend that businesses were fighting a losing battle against a handful of repeat offenders.

Mr Miranda, a florist whose premises are in Wallsend, calls them the "2287 gang", which is the postcode of Wallsend and where the offenders live. Mr Miranda was reported as saying:

We know who they are ... They are a little gang that goes from shop to shop, causing trouble wherever they go, but for whatever reason they are still out there.

Mr Miranda said that previously it was about money but that now it is about vandalism, and they seem to get away with it. There is no pride in this group. The owner and operator of the local takeaway told the Newcastle Herald that vandalism and theft occurred almost every day. The Newcastle Herald further reported:

We have a new fence up the back. They just tore it down ... We have security cameras, we have alarms—it doesn't stop them. They will try and steal from us while we're still here ... I don't know what else we can do ...

Many complaints centre on police response times and locals have called for a stronger police presence in Wallsend. The chemist in Wallsend told the Newcastle Herald that she was frustrated by an apparent lack of action. She said:

I have been here 30 years and this is the worst I've seen it. Something needs to be done.

Other business owners were scared to speak to the Newcastle Herald because they were worried about attacks. I am personally aware of that because early in January I walked around and spoke to most of the local businesses. Unfortunately, some of them have not reported the crimes. Some of them are scared of this group of youths who are causing havoc in the main street. I sought an urgent meeting with the new local area commander, Superintendent Brett Greentree. It was a very productive meeting, and I thank him for talking with me. I acknowledge the police are doing their very best. I admire them because they have a tough job and they are understaffed.

Due to a lack of policing resources, the people who live on the far west of the main local area command are being ignored. The people committing these crimes know that the police have a long way to travel to the crime scene. This is not just about law enforcement. It is about helping young people in our community find alternative methods of socialising that does not involve criminality. This is about the Wallsend community and teaching these community members to do the right thing. Wallsend is a wonderful community with thriving businesses. I do not want these businesses leaving because they are scared. In particular, women when locking up at night are fearful that a young gang will attack them, take their money or break into their businesses and smash their windows. I say to the police: You are doing a wonderful job but can you please increase your presence in the Wallsend area to reduce the crime?

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) (18:44):

I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House. The member may have written to the Minister for Police already, but I will endeavour to organise a meeting with the Minister or one of his senior staff members at some time in the near future to discuss this matter.