



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Motions

8 March 2018

FIREARMS AND ORGANISED CRIME SQUAD STAFFING

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) (13:06):

I support the motion moved by my good friend the member for Fairfield. I thank the member for Fairfield and shadow Minister for Justice and Police for visiting the Wallsend electorate a number of times to take part in community meetings about policing. They were successful meetings because of his commitment to reduce crime in New South Wales and to make people safe. The Labor Party knows that policing is a complicated business. With only so many officers for so many millions of people in New South Wales allocating resources means making difficult decisions. I have nothing but respect for the NSW Police Force. Police officers have a tough and dangerous job and they serve our communities well.

Wallsend has had more than its fair share of shootings and it does not want anymore. In the past two years, a number of shootings and firearms offences have taken place in Wallsend and across parts of the Hunter. On 28 March 2017, 27 shots were fired into a home in Longworth Avenue, leaving bullet holes the size of a dollar coin. Police determined that the shots had come from an illegal semiautomatic weapon. Thankfully nobody was injured. This occurred after an incident in December 2016, when a brawl between rival groups broke out at a service station on Thomas Street in Wallsend. A gun was produced along with various other weapons but thankfully no shots were fired. Days later, a brawl at the Fire Station Hotel in Wallsend resulted in the local high school being put into lockdown after a gun was produced in the car park which is close to the high school.

Early on the morning of 9 March 2015, shots were fired into a home in Youll Street, Wallsend. Fortunately, no-one was injured but, again, the weapon used was an illegal pistol that was recovered some months later during a roadside stop by police. As a result of repeated freedom of information requests, documents have revealed that the State Crime Command Firearms and Organised Crime Squad has had its staff cut by almost 25 per cent since this Government was elected. That is 25 per cent fewer specialist police officers on the streets, which is putting our community at risk. It also means there is an increase in the number of illegal guns on our streets. It makes no sense that fewer cops are being deployed to the firearms squad when we are trying to deal with the rugged gang crime.

The Minister has said that his Government is committed to ensuring that strict and robust firearms laws are enforced and that illegal firearms are taken off the streets. How does the Minister explain the increase in gun crimes in the Wallsend electorate? I call on the Minister to take the necessary action to deal with illegal firearms and gun crimes. During my 11 years in this place I have given many speeches about policing. Again, I am not criticising the police; in fact, I support the NSW Police Force and its need for more resources so that police officers can do their job well.