

Ref: 5464 F2 JS

13 October 2005

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Cnr Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I am writing to provide my response to petition number 518-05 which was lodged by Ms Jann Stuckey MP, Member for Currumbin and received by the Legislative Assembly on 24 August 2005.

The petition seeks an increased police presence and the targeting of youth-related offences in the Currumbin, Elanora and Palm Beach area.

I have received the following information from the Queensland Police Service on the issues raised in the petition.

The Police Service advises that the types of offences mentioned in the petition are often associated with anti-social behaviour by drunken or drug-affected youths at or in the vicinity of parties or other gatherings. This affects various communities throughout Queensland and is a concern for this Government, the Police Service and the community as a whole.

The policing of such incidents is both challenging and resource intensive and in May 2005 I formed the Safe Youth Parties Taskforce (the Taskforce) to examine this issue with a view to identifying effective new ways to address the law and order challenges associated with youth parties. The Taskforce is chaired by Mrs Julie Attwood MP, Member for Mt Ommaney and has consulted widely with the community.

I am advised that on 7 September 2005 the Taskforce held a community meeting at the Christine Avenue Community Centre on the Gold Coast. I understand that members of the public made a number of submissions during this meeting on possible strategies to address the issues raised in the petition.

The Taskforce is currently reviewing all submissions received as well as relevant strategies and laws being used in other States and countries. The extensive work of the Taskforce is well advanced and I look forward to receiving its report and recommendations.

With regard to the request for an increased police presence, I am informed that four additional police positions were allocated to Palm Beach Police Station during the 2004-05 financial year. In addition, policing services in the area have been boosted by the recent establishment of the Elanora Police Beat located at 194 K P McGrath Drive.

Senior Constable Jason McCoomb of the Elanora Police Beat has already established a number of networks within the community, including with local schools. These networks assist local police in identifying when and where mass gatherings of young people are planned or likely to occur. This information enables police to take steps to reduce the risk of law and order problems occurring in the affected localities.

With respect to young people drinking in public places within the Palm Beach Police Division, I am advised that Palm Beach Police are addressing this issue through dedicated liquor patrols which operate on Friday and Saturday nights. The officers on these patrols issue liquor infringement notices to any persons found unlawfully consuming liquor in a public place.

Officers attached to other units such as the Tactical Crime Squad and Juvenile Aid Bureau also regularly conduct operations and patrols within the Palm Beach Division.

I am further advised that the Assistant Commissioner, South Eastern Police Region is satisfied that the Currumbin, Elanora and Palm Beach area is receiving effective policing services under the current arrangements. Nevertheless, the Assistant Commissioner gives his assurance that the staffing allocation for Palm Beach Station will continue to be monitored and revised as part of annual planning processes to ensure an appropriate level of service is maintained.

Regarding police numbers in general, the Beattie Government has been and remains strongly committed to increasing police numbers and supporting the Queensland Police Service. The 2005-06 State Budget has provided a record \$1.178 billion operating budget for the Queensland Police Service, an increase of \$132.7 million or 12.7 per cent from the previous budget which was also a record allocation.

Since coming to office in 1998 we have increased the number of extra police officers by about 300 each year. That has meant training about 600 recruits each year to allow for attrition. We are on target to exceed our goal of 9150 Queensland police officers by September 2005. After achieving this we will continue to maintain police numbers above the national average of the police to population ratio. To meet this commitment, the 2005-06 State Budget provides funding for an extra 228 police positions. This includes 50 additional Juvenile Aid Bureau officers to enhance the police response to child safety issues, as well as a special staffing supplement of 50 police positions to assist in maintaining staffing of critical front-line positions.

As a result of the Beattie Government's commitment to boosting police numbers, the number of police officers in the Queensland Police Service is expected to increase to 9378 officers by the end of September 2006 - an increase of more than 37 per cent since July 1998 when this Government came to office.

The Beattie Government is also committed to the ongoing civilianisation program in the Queensland Police Service which is aimed at maximising the number of police officers allocated to operational duties. The civilianisation program is being substantially boosted as a result of this Government's election commitment to return more than 500 serving police officers to front-line operational duties during the term of this Government.

As the additional front-line police officers resulting from these commitments progressively become available for deployment, they will continue to be allocated throughout the State in accordance with the needs and priorities identified by the Queensland Police Service.

Yours sincerely

Judy Spence MP
Minister for Police and Corrective Services