

## 08 NEWS

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## CITY POLICE CRISIS

# Coast cops fresh Games cash snub

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THE Gold Coast will not get a dedicated drug squad or an 88 extra police officers from the \$60 million left over from the Commonwealth Games.

Labor refused to commit the money to bolster police numbers after being grilled in State Parliament yesterday for cuts to cop resources on the Gold Coast.

During a tense Question Time in which Speaker Curtis Pitt rebuked MPs for "unacceptable" behaviour, the LNP asked seven policing questions, including:

- How could Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk have confidence in Police Minister Mark Ryan after he gave three different figures in one day about Gold Coast police numbers.

- After a heartbreaking recent report showed Queenslanders dying from drug overdoses on the Coast had increased by 75 per cent in the past decade, would the Premier explain why her Government continued to deny resources for a dedicated drug squad.

- Given Police Commissioner Ian Stewart admitted "I would love more money" in the budget, would the Premier commit to allocating more resources for Coast police from the \$60 million of leftover Commonwealth Games funds.

The questions follow the launch of a petition by the LNP pressuring the Government to provide 88 extra police officers for the Gold Coast.

The LNP bases the figure on the 44 extra police Labor promised before last year's State election and the city having 44 fewer permanent cops than two years ago - from 886 in June 2016 to the 842 the Premier admitted the Coast had last

month in State Parliament.

Labor argues the "44 positions less is a fallacy".

Last week, in an email claiming the *Bulletin* appeared to be misleading readers on police numbers, it said the actual strength was 1059 in September this year. But on Tuesday this week the figure had changed again, with Mr Ryan telling Parliament the strength was 1054.

The Government and Commissioner Ian Stewart say the Coast will get its extra 44 officers but the commitment is across four years.

The Premier told Parliament: "We have consistently made sure that the police budget goes from strength to strength."

Ms Palaszczuk said any drug death was "heartbreaking", the ice issue was nationwide and her government had addressed it through an action plan.

Treasurer Jackie Trad said Mr Ryan asked for police resources at every opportunity and was provided with them.

"Let me say, the gall of those opposite to come into this place, to come into this place and argue the point about resourcing the police service," Ms Trad told Parliament.

The Government in almost four years had increased the police budget by almost 13 per cent, she said.

Under the LNP, the increase was about 3 per cent.

Mr Ryan faced a barrage of interjections as he defended the Government's \$2.4 billion capital works and operating budget for police, saying it would provide more officers than before.

"They always laugh when I talk about the good work of the police service. Every single time. They think it's a joke."

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Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk speaks to Parliament during Question Time yesterday, when embattled Police Minister Mark Ryan (back) again came under fire. PICTURE: LAM KINSTON

## New unit lagging on crime statistics

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A STATISTICAL review of crime figures in Queensland has not been released, more than 16 months after the Labor Government announced taxpayers would fork out \$2.7 million on a new unit.

Attorney-General Yvette D'Ath announced the cash injection into the Queensland Government Statistician Office, to form the Crime Statistics and Research Unit (CSRU), in July 2017. The crime section of its website has not been reviewed since September 18, 2017.

Up until 2017, the Queensland Police Service had released the statistical review between September 30 and mid-October every year, detailing everything from crime trends, victims of crime and offenders, right down to breaking down offences. With the creation of the CSRU, that is no longer the case.

Ms D'Ath said in 2017 the creation of the CSRU was to ensure an independent review of crime stats and to take the responsibility away from criminal justice agencies.

"The CSRU must be independent and transparent in order to have the trust and confidence of the Queensland public," Ms D'Ath said.

"It moves responsibility for reporting criminal statistics away from criminal justice agencies to a recognised and already independent statistician's office."

A Queensland Treasury spokesman said they were in the process of preparing a "number" of reports.

"The unit will ensure regular, independent releases, mapping crime trends over time," the spokesman said.

"A number of statistical products are being prepared. Consultation across criminal justice agencies to better manage data collection is continuing."

"Data is expected to be released once this consultation has finished, along with the Crime Report, Queensland 2017-18."

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## MP fires shot over Nerang officer shortfall

NERANG is at least seven police officers short despite the Gold Coast Hinterland facing a drug-fuelled crime wave, according to the Opposition.

Mudgeeraba MP Ros Bates has fired a political shot in the police budget debate at Labor rival Meagan Scanlon in the neighbouring seat of Gaven.

The registered nurse keeps close contact with emergency service staff and is aware of the impact of budget cuts on frontline government staff.

"In Nerang, I know they are

seven officers short of what they are supposed to have and are under the pump," Ms Bates said.

"Increased hooning, record numbers of domestic violence reports, youth gangs stealing cars and breaking into houses and the drug crisis is all contributing to increased local crime rates. Meagan Scanlon needs to stand up to her Labor mates in Brisbane and start fighting for more police resources on the Gold Coast."

"We will hold Annastacia

Palaszczuk to account for her election promise of 44 extra police each day until the next State election."

Ms Scanlon said she would always lobby for more police but the Queensland Police Service had advised the Nerang police division had its full complement of staff.

She said Nerang only this week had been awarded the Gold Coast Outstanding Police Unit-Station of the year for its dedication, commitment and outstanding service.

"My dad was a Gold Coast police officer and I'm a born and bred local so I'll always fight for the needs of my community," Ms Scanlon said.

"There are more than 1000 police on Gold Coast and they do an incredible job keeping our community safe."

LNP leader Deb Frecklington said Labor's savage cuts to frontline police services was putting community safety at risk. "Annastacia Palaszczuk is effectively asking our frontline police to do more with less."

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