

# **DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH**

**9 Feb 2022**

## **Response Mr Hanson PMB re: ACT Policing**

I thank Mr Hanson for bringing this motion to the Assembly, however, I do not support the motion. I welcome and support Minister Gentleman's amendment.

The ACT Government has, and continues to commit significant, holistic, investment in community safety. I want to acknowledge that we have a police force that works day and night and deserves enormous credit for the role they play in keeping our community safe.

Compared with other Australian jurisdictions, the ACT is a comparatively safe place in which to live. We owe that to the strong social support, education, health systems and dedicated and innovative police force that we have here.

Madame Speaker, I find Mr Hanson's motion disingenuous. Mr Hanson makes no argument about why he views New South Wales as the panacea of police numbers; let alone any mention of community safety outcomes.

Perhaps it's just because it's a Liberal state Government? I don't know, that's my speculation.

I've reviewed the Australian Productivity Commission's 2022 report on Government Services: specifically policing.

In 2020-21 New South Wales had 244 operational staff per 100,000 people in the State.

We had 219; that's 25 less per 100,000 in the ACT.

In non-operational staff New South Wales had 23 per 100,000; while we have 31 – we have eight more non-operational staff per 100,000 people than New South Wales.

Overall, if you add those numbers up – In terms of direct state comparison of FTE police staff – the ACT has 17 less positions than NSW per 100,000 people.

To give this some context beyond mere numbers alone, I think it's worth pointing out we only have a few hundred thousand people, and all are concentrated in one distinct area. New South Wales has millions of people, including one city alone of 5 million, and a vast geographic landscape.

Mr Hanson points out that the ACT is the only jurisdiction to record negative growth in recurrent expenditure for police services since 2016; I note that is only negative 0.1%. According to the Productivity Commission, New South Wales recorded a 4.4% growth in expenditure.

If Mr Hanson actually looked further at the numbers, he would see the investment in New South Wales is not in the numbers of police. In fact, New South Wales has had an increase in recent years of 5 police staff per 100,000 community residents. We in the ACT, over that same time period, have doubled that number – we have seen an increase of 10 per 100,000 Canberrans.

Again, let's look at the Productivity Commission's numbers, this time in terms of police responsiveness.

The Productivity Commission states that the responsiveness of police to calls for assistance is critical to the effectiveness of police services.

The *New South Wales Police Force* reports the number of urgent (imminent threat to life or property) response calls and the percentage attended is 75% within a target time of 12 minutes.

*ACT Policing* report response time targets for three incident categories:

- *Priority One* incidents (life threatening or critical situations) are 80 per cent or more of responses within 10 minutes (77.5 per cent achieved in 2020-21)

I know which jurisdiction I would rather live in! In the ACT you will get a police officer to a critical incident 2 mins faster than anywhere else in Australia.

So perhaps Mr Hanson's motion is all about politics.

If Mr Hanson genuinely wanted to see an increase in police resources and an increase in community safety – he would not trot out the same motion and the same lines over and over again. He would be looking for new arguments, for innovation in Policing, for evidence-based community safety initiatives.

But, Madame Speaker, Mr Hanson doesn't do that – instead, he puts forward the same rhetoric. And I see how this rhetoric plays out in the community. Mr Hanson and I live in the safest part of Canberra. Yet that is not the perception on the ground. Mr Hanson fuels perceptions for political gain, he plays on peoples fear, and this significantly undermines the work that Police do in our electorate of Murrumbidgee.

I am proud to be part of a Labor/Green Government where the issue of community safety is genuine and broad with a focus on diverting people away from the criminal justice system, reducing recidivism.

I am proud to work with a Minister who is supporting and who is innovating our ACT police force. Thank you, Minister Gentleman for your leadership in this area.

Programs and models in the ACT such as the community-based Police Services Model, the Proactive Intervention and Diversion Team - PIDT - and the Police, Ambulance and Clinician Early Response program - PACER - are all excellent examples of the Government's commitment to community safety, and to delivering meaningful, long-term outcomes.

As this Assembly knows, I am a strong supporter of the ACT's Community-based Police Services Model and believe that it is through programs such as this that we will see reduced crime.

The model ensures that we have a more visible, proactive and connected police service; one that has strong relationships with our community and is trusted and approachable.

The model combines approaches across technology, equipment and resources to deliver a long-term strategic investment in ACT Policing and in our community.

Its effectiveness is proven, in countries including Scotland; and is based on principles of taking proactive action rather than being reliant or predominantly focused on a reactive or response-oriented approach. These latter approaches do require greater numbers of police.

However, I'm more interested in tackling root causes, and looking to bring an end to systemic issues of crime within our community, rather than just dealing with crime as it occurs and – seemingly – adopting an attitude of accepting crime.

The Government's Proactive Intervention and Diversion Team is another model which delivers visible police presence in the community. The PIDT focus is on crime disruption, prevention, early intervention and problem solving.

PACER is yet another excellent example whereby ACT Policing direct staffing resources effectively to achieve community safety outcomes. It particularly benefits those in our community who are most vulnerable, particularly those with mental health concerns.

Where police would traditionally be the first responders to a mental health call-out, the PACER program – as the name suggests – provides a paramedic, clinician and police officer all working together to attend call outs which require a mental health response.

I congratulate the ACT Government on looking at root causes and finding innovative solutions which are cost-effective and provide more robust, holistic and long-term outcomes.

I look forward to seeing continued positive outcomes of the various proactive and community-based police services in action. I also want to see investment in youth and social welfare programs, and community and sports facilities to get to the real heart of crime prevention.

I commend Minister Gentleman, ACT Policing and all emergency services staff on the critical work they do. Thank you.