

METHAMPHETAMINE — WASTEWATER TESTING

896. MR S.J. PRICE to the Minister for Police:

Before I ask my question, on behalf of the member for Kalamunda I would like to acknowledge the students and staff from Walliston Primary School and thank them for visiting Parliament today.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's efforts in keeping Western Australia safe and strong by tackling the scourge of methamphetamine in our community. Can the minister update the house on what the latest wastewater drug testing results show about the measures being undertaken by this government to tackle the supply of methamphetamine in WA?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for his excellent question and for his very strong support of the Western Australia Police Force tackling the scourge of methamphetamine in our community. It is not surprising that the opposition has not asked me a question about those meth results. It has had ample opportunity to do so.

The fact of the matter is that on 29 October the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission released its national wastewater results. As people may know, the ACIC takes results from seven sites in Western Australia, three metropolitan and four regional. I can say to the house that based on those wastewater results, the consumption of methamphetamine in our community is the lowest on record. The reduction in meth consumption equates to over 290 000 fewer doses per day since the peak in 2016. That is around 93 000 fewer doses per day than there were in December 2019. This is a significant reduction from that high at the end of 2016, when the Leader of the Opposition happened to be Minister for Police, to now. It is a hugely significant reduction. It is 60 per cent lower than it was at the peak in 2016. It is now well below the national average. Perth's result is the third lowest of the state capitals, behind those of Hobart and Brisbane—a very different ranking from what it was in 2016. Our rate is the second lowest of all the states, just behind that of Tasmania. Regional WA was one of only two regional state areas in which the rate of consumption of meth use fell. Of course, our government has taken a very strong line on methamphetamine; we did that from day one. We introduced additional penalties such as life imprisonment for meth dealers. We committed to 120 extra personnel for our police. We have invested in an amazing number of resources for our police to help them tackle the scourge. People will be aware that our police have had significant results in dealing with organised crime in the community and taking methamphetamine out of the community.

I never thought I would get to see what \$9 million in cash looked like, but I saw that yesterday; it filled two trestle tables at police headquarters. That amount of cash was seized, along with at least four kilograms of methamphetamine. There were two trucks, one in Meckering and one in Coolgardie—a couple of vehicles. Police are still counting the cash, so \$9 million is not the end of it. I am told that previously the record amount of cash seized by any police force in Australia was in New South Wales, and it was \$8.5 million in cash. This seizure already exceeds \$9 million. It is an absolutely fantastic result by our organised crime division. It shows that when we put in the resources and the effort, we can get really significant results. We know that this cash was destined for New South Wales. Two men in one of the trucks were arrested; one man was from New South Wales and one was from Queensland. That cash was heading east, presumably to continue to fund the meth trade. The Western Australia Police Force here has disrupted a major organised crime syndicate. These are the kinds of results that make a huge difference to the amount of methamphetamine entering our community. Disrupting the supply chain is one part of it. Our government has had a comprehensive meth action plan from day one, but this is the best result on record. Police will not give up here. Our government will not give up here. We will continue to target those people who peddle in this vile trade.

I thank the member for Forrestfield for asking this question on such an important issue because he knows, as I do, that methamphetamine destroys families and drives crime in our community. People under its influence do things that they would not normally do and that impacts very badly on their families. That is why it has been a priority for us. I congratulate the organised crime squad and the whole Western Australia Police Force for this fantastic result.