

POLICE — TACTICAL RESPONSE GROUP

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

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's unprecedented support for the Western Australia Police Force and the recent comments by the director general of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation regarding Australia's terrorism threat levels. Can the minister update the house on how this investment is supporting WA's police preparedness to respond to serious incidents and emergencies; and, furthermore, can the minister outline to the house how this investment will support WA police in the work it does to protect our community?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for his question and also for his wholehearted support for the Western Australia Police Force in dealing with the challenges it confronts.

On 17 March, the director general of ASIO tabled his annual threat assessment, and it was quite concerning. It confirmed that the risk of terrorist threat remains at probable. His actual statement about terrorism was —

We have credible intelligence that individuals and groups have the capability and intent to conduct terrorism onshore.

He made it very clear that the threat is significant and is not going away. He went on to refer to those motivated by religious violent extremism and also the growing threat of what is termed right-wing terrorism or ideological extremism. Investigations into that side of the terrorism threat spectrum is consuming some 40 per cent of ASIO's time. It was therefore timely that a couple of weeks after that, I was able to visit the Tactical Response Group's training facility here in Perth and have a close look at our capability in Western Australia. I have firsthand experience of counterterrorism training and capability, as does the member for Willagee, whom I acknowledge in his absence. I have to concede that my experience is a little dated. It was a little disturbing to note that I commenced that training two years before the member for Scarborough was born. Although my knowledge of the capability is a little dated, it gives me a benchmark. After visiting the wonderful people in the TRG and witnessing some of their equipment and capabilities, I am able to confirm that it far exceeds anything that I was able to employ all those years ago. It has all changed since I was in the tactical assault group, as it was called in those days, when it was the only one in the country in the Special Air Service Regiment. Subsequent to the 9/11 attacks, there has been a massive increase in capability right across the country. There is another TAG in the 2nd Commando Regiment in Sydney. All the police assault groups are well resourced and coordinated in their response and are supported far more fulsomely by the commonwealth and individual states and territories. Our TRG's equipment and capabilities are world class. It has method-of-entry capabilities that were resident only in the military when I was doing it way back when. Its weapons and techniques are first class. I take the opportunity to convey to the house and the Western Australian public that there is a threat out there. There are threats other than COVID-19. This one is very real, but Western Australia is prepared. Our government has ensured that over the forward estimates, some \$900 million will be added to the police budget and an additional 950 police officers will be put into the field. Madam Speaker, as the former Minister for Police, you ensured that our police are well armed with their legislative powers, with this Parliament having passed the Terrorism (Extraordinary Powers) Amendment Bill 2018 and the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Amendment Bill 2019 to ensure that we have every capability and law behind us that is necessary to respond to this threat.