

POLICE — DRONES

**1040. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's significant investment in resources and equipment that our dedicated police officers need to keep our communities safe. Can the minister update the house on how this government's investment in establishing a fleet of remotely piloted aircraft will support police operations, and can the minister advise the house how this investment builds on this government's record of equipping WA police officers with much-needed modern resources?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:**

I thank the member for Belmont for that question and for her ongoing support of our police. I know she has an excellent working relationship with police in her electorate.

In addition to the McGowan government's commitment to purchasing another helicopter for the Western Australia Police Force, today we have announced the establishment of a fleet of remotely piloted aircraft, colloquially known as drones by most people. Up until now, police have had access to fewer than a handful of drones, which they have trialled and used for a variety of purposes, and they have seen their effectiveness. I am well aware that other states are vastly more advanced in this area than the Western Australia Police Force has been. I am delighted to announce, though, that we have just put out a tender for the supply of some 35 drones for the Western Australia Police Force, and as part of that tender we are anticipating that some 60 police officers will be trained to deploy those drones. Up until now, the only drones we have had have been based at Jandakot and they have been deployed from Jandakot. This will mean, Mr Speaker—your district will be one of the beneficiaries—that every regional policing district will have access to at least one drone and two officers qualified to be able to deploy them.

These drones can be equipped with high-resolution digital video, also floodlights, potentially speakers, and infrared capacity. They can be deployed at daytime or night. They are useful in a huge range of activities. I think people see the very obvious benefit of a grid search, for example, for a missing person in a remote community. They can be deployed in the metropolitan area. They are very useful over the vast regions of our state, perhaps searching for a missing tourist or someone of that nature. They can also be deployed to crime scenes to do crime scene mapping; they can be deployed in a variety of ways. Rather than have fewer than a handful of drones at Jandakot, this will be a fleet of some 35 drones or more with trained officers. Drones will be deployed in every regional area and a number of our specialist squads will be looking forward to having their own drone to deploy; for example, the tactical response group and the water police. The range of activities the drones will be able to assist police with are phenomenal. I saw a demonstration this morning. Drone footage can be projected onto a screen, a tablet or a mobile phone and can be directly fed back to the police operation command centre, so it can be seen on the big screen and senior officers can have a bird's-eye view of a situation that might be unfolding. This will provide an additional level of safety for our officers and the community as well, because with those eyes above, much more can be seen, particularly if there are hazardous situations where police are deployed. This is a fantastic initiative that takes our police into the modern era of policing.