

CORONAVIRUS — POLICE RESOURCES

232. Mr S.A. MILLMAN to the Minister for Police:

Before I ask my question, I recognise the tremendous work of the WA Police Force during this particularly challenging time.

I refer to the efforts of frontline agencies that are working together to manage and respond to the impact of COVID-19. Can the minister outline to the house what extra resources have been provided to the WA Police Force to ensure that our police can perform the extra duties required during this difficult time?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

I thank the member for Mount Lawley for his question and for his appreciation of the Western Australia Police Force. He knows that local police do an excellent job in his electorate, and they are doing an excellent job right around the state. During this COVID-19 situation, they have a range of extra responsibilities, and they are stepping up to the mark and doing a fantastic job. It is worth noting that they are going about their normal job too, attending all those major incidents that we hear about in the news every day. Overnight I heard that a 47-year-old male had come off his motorbike and died. Over the Easter weekend, I heard that a 17-year-old girl died in a motor vehicle crash in the south west. I think everyone will have seen on the news that two homicides occurred in the metropolitan area over the weekend.

Our major crash unit, our local police, our homicide squad and all those units of policing are getting on and doing their job. Side by side with that, they have had to step up to the mark, particularly with border control and establishing those intrastate borders. That has never been done before. We have had ordinary people—not criminals, not people who have broken the law—in quarantine. It is so important that those ordinary people, who have perhaps been on a cruise liner or come from interstate, remain in quarantine and that we track those people on behalf of the whole community of Western Australia. That is why the McGowan government has given police additional resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We immediately recruited an additional 150 police officers. We are purchasing a further 100 automatic numberplate recognition cameras. We have also funded 200 GPS tracking devices for electronic monitoring to enhance police tracking capabilities. Those initiatives are part of a \$91 million package to support WA police.

As people are already aware, during its term in office the McGowan government has already provided an additional \$300 million to the WA Police Force, which includes \$90 million for body armour, body-worn cameras, drones, and personal issue mobile devices, otherwise known as phones. All those things are proving vital during this pandemic.

As part of the additional \$91 million that was just announced, those 150 police officers will get expedited training. They will do some core components, and then we will put them out to police stations and into behind-the-scene roles, so that we can free up other fully trained and qualified officers to head out to the front line. Similarly, we are fast-tracking the 135 recruits that we have in training, again to serve roles in our police stations and those behind-the-scene roles within police, so that we can free up more fully trained police officers to go out.

Automatic numberplate recognition technology will enhance our capacity. This was introduced under the Gallop government and police have gradually increased their number of ANPR over the years. They are very useful for keeping those intrastate borders in place. Traditionally, we use them to identify vehicles of people who have done something wrong: people who perhaps have a bench warrant out for their arrest, or whose vehicles are unlicensed, or who have lost their driver's licence, or a range of other things. But we can also key in datasets of those who are allowed to have free passage. Numberplates of trucks and those for other essential travel can go into the system, and they need not be stopped at the border at all. Likewise, tracking devices will save a lot of police time so that we not only have more police to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also ensure that we are not taking away from those day-to-day instances that police have to attend, some of which, as I highlighted at the start, are very significant.