

POLICE — RESIGNATIONS

53. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Police:

I refer to reports that WA police officers continue to quit the force at alarming rates, with 473 police officers resigning in 2022 compared with the average of around 150 a year, and 61 police officers having already resigned in 2023, as of 14 February. Does the minister stand by his comments that the record resignations of police are “entirely attributable to the economy and to other opportunities”?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

Where did the member get that last number from? I have not seen that particular number of resignations.

Ms L. Mettam: It was through the Legislative Council.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Was that the resignation total? No; is the member talking about resignations or retirements and resignations?

Ms L. Mettam: The 61?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think the member might be talking about the latter.

Ms L. Mettam: It is a lot. It's triple what's on average.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Just be careful, member. With respect to my observation about why officers were leaving the force, I believe that Western Australia is, as the member has heard, the most attractive place on the planet. We are in the midst of an extraordinary demand for skilled labour and quality people in the community. We went through two years of COVID. Prior to that, we had a few years recovering from the absolute disaster of an economy that members opposite imposed on this state. Their budget mismanagement resulted in several years of deficits, massive debt and pessimism in the community so that people who might otherwise have considered leaving did not. Then we were confronted with a pandemic. Therefore, people who might otherwise have considered leaving did not, and then last year there was a significant lift in the numbers, particularly in the second quarter of last year, of people departing. But, at the same time—something that the member has failed to acknowledge—we have been recruiting police officers in record numbers. There are extraordinary numbers of Western Australians applying to join the police force.

I met Assistant Commissioner Craig Donaldson only last week at an event, and I asked him about how things are going at the Police Academy. The member will be very happy and pleased, I am sure, to trumpet the success we have had in attracting good young people to join the Western Australia Police Force, and to know that there are 180 recruits training at the academy right now. On Thursday night, I am going to a graduation. Next month, there will be another graduation and, thereafter, every single month, in all likelihood, we will be packing them in, as we did last year. Every single month, there was graduation after graduation of quality Western Australians who volunteered to join the police force and serve. That is a good thing. We should be thankful for it and acknowledge them.

Beyond that, as I indicated in my last answer to the question, we have had incredible interest from the United Kingdom and Ireland. The officers who we are seeking to attract from the UK and Ireland are experienced officers. They have had a minimum of three years' service as a police officer. They are still young enough and physically capable enough to take on the challenges of policing, but also with some experience under their belts. Their transition course is about 18 weeks. It is about half of a normal course, and, as a consequence, once they start arriving in the second half of the year, they will be much more rapidly joining our numbers.

The Western Australia Police Force, as we speak, is about 400 stronger than it was in 2016 when members opposite were last in office. We will continue to grow it. The Western Australia Police Force has all the funding and resources necessary to continue to grow and be far larger, about 15 per cent bigger, than it was when members opposite were in office.