

METH BORDER FORCE

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

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's record funding for the meth border force and its work in tackling the scourge of methamphetamine in WA. Can the minister update the house on the success that the meth border force is having in cracking down on the supply of this insidious drug and dismantling those drug syndicates that peddle it.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for his question about this most important issue. I thank him for his continued support of Western Australia Police Force officers, particularly our officers in Forrestfield. Members will be aware that ahead of the last election, we made a commitment that if we were elected to government, we would tackle the scourge of methamphetamine head on. We said that we would put in place sentences of up to life imprisonment for those who traffic methamphetamine, and that was the first piece of legislation introduced in this house after the election. We also said that we would provide the Western Australia Police Force with 100 additional officers and 20 specialist officers to fund that meth border force—120 extra personnel. We have backed that up in government and over \$125 million has been allocated to the Western Australia Police Force to employ those officers and to deal with the scourge of methamphetamine. More than that, we have also provided specialist equipment to back that up.

That includes things like the meth trucks I have spoken about before in Parliament, the vans that have gone out to regional areas, the technology that helps to identify drugs very simply and quickly, and the technology that helps to download mobile phones very, very quickly. What we know is that those criminal organisations, those organised crime groups that peddle methamphetamine and other drugs in our communities, peddle it in conjunction with guns and other weapons, and they deal in very large quantities of cash. Essentially, the Western Australian Police Force has put this resource to amazingly brilliant use. It has developed a new strategy and a fresh approach to targeting methamphetamine and other drug syndicates in our state and beyond our borders.

As members would be aware, Commissioner of Police, Mr Chris Dawson, formerly headed up the Australian Crime and Intelligence Commission and Mr Col Blanch, our now deputy commissioner, was a senior officer of the commission. They have taken up the challenge put to them by our government to tackle those drug dealers and those drug syndicates. They are now doing it through a new strategy called WARPOT, which stands for Western Australian regional priority organisational target. Today, it was announced that the first of the six identified targets has largely been broken apart. In that organisation, there have been some phenomenal results. There have been big drug busts before, and often police will come across or seize a large amount of methamphetamine, but this strategy is about disrupting and destroying organised crime syndicates. As part of Operation Signal, the WA Police Force has seized 75 kilograms of methamphetamine, most of which was seized in Kalgoorlie; 10.5 kilograms of heroin; three kilograms of cocaine; two kilograms of MDMA, otherwise known as ecstasy; 13 firearms including long-arm rifles and pistols; and over \$4 million in cash, of which some \$1.2 million was seized in the last week alone and is on display at police headquarters today. Fifty people have been charged with over 130 offences. This strategy is a new way of targeting these criminal organisations.

We know that drug dealers and crime organisations do not stick within state boundaries, nor do they stick within national boundaries. These drug cartels deal across Australia and across the world. As part of the new strategy and their ongoing work, the commissioner and deputy commissioner are liaising and working very closely with not only ICAC, but also the Australia Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre, the Australian Federal Police Federal and police from other countries such as the United States' Drug Enforcement Administration and the United Kingdom's National Crime Agency. Just like the drug dealers, our law enforcement officers are going across borders as well. They are following the money, weapons and drugs, and they are getting great results. What we have seen today is the start of a very new strategy for WA Police. It is not just about the last week or two; this work has been ongoing over the last year or so. It has delivered a tremendous result that will take methamphetamine and other drugs off the streets of Western Australia and, more importantly, it has not just disrupted but largely destroyed a major drug syndicate in this state.