

RETAIL WORKERS — ASSAULTS

**4. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:**

I refer to legislation to be introduced into state Parliament this week that will amend the Criminal Code to insert a new provision with higher penalties for those who assault retail workers, including by hitting, throwing objects at or spitting on a worker.

As one of the catalysts of this decision was research from the McKell Institute that highlighted that assaults on workers in WA had increased by 38.8 per cent between 2014 and 2022, why is this legislation not being expanded to cover all assaults, given that violent family assaults have gone up 48 per cent and non-family assaults have gone up 30 per cent since the Labor Party came to power?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

This law reform is being driven by retail workers; they petitioned the upper house. Over 9 000 retail workers said to my government that they want better protections—that they want to feel safe in the workplace and that they want a government that will back them. We are doing just that. We will stand by workers because no worker deserves to have to go to work on a daily basis under the threat of assault. They should feel safe and protected in their workplace. Sadly, we know that 90 per cent of Western Australian retail workers will experience some form of physical or verbal abuse. Do not forget that these are often young people who work in fast-food outlets, at supermarket checkouts and in bottle shops—obviously, they are over 18 years of age in that case. We need to do what we can to stand by them. We need to do what we can to ensure that they have protections and that we reflect our disgust at people who assault retail workers through laws that establish harsher penalties—and there will be. The maximum penalty under these laws will go from 18 months' imprisonment to seven years' imprisonment. The maximum fine will go from \$18 000 to \$36 000. These are important law reforms that are about saying to retail workers, "We've got your back." I am immensely proud of these new laws. We will bring them in as soon as possible. We will make sure that we stand up for Western Australian workers.