

POLICE OFFICERS — EQUIPMENT PROVISION

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

I refer to the extraordinary work of Western Australian police officers who have taken on various additional responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic on top of their usual everyday policing roles. Can the minister update the house on what the McGowan government is doing to ensure that our police officers have the tools they need to continue doing their vitally important job of keeping the community safe?

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

I thank the member for Belmont for her question, her ongoing support of our police officers and her kind words about their response during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is certainly well deserved.

It is Labor governments in this state, particularly over the last couple of decades, that have really led the way in providing police with the tools and technology that they need to do the job. Unfortunately, during the eight years of the Barnett–Harvey era, our police fell behind. There was no money on budget, no procurement and no delivery for the new tools that police needed. Many of those things were identified but not funded. That is why, when we came to government, we had to provide the Western Australia Police Force with an additional \$300 million for the police budget. That included some \$90 million for things that police had been asking for for years. WA officers had fallen behind the rest of Australia on these matters. These included personal issue body armour to operationally deployable officers, body-worn cameras, drones and personal-use mobile phones for frontline officers. Last month, we announced more. We announced the funding of 100 mobile automatic numberplate recognition cameras to be deployed and 200 GPS tracking devices for electronic monitoring. These are the tools that police need in the modern era to do their job. As part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we rolled out early those mobile phones to our police officers.

Although it is right to focus on COVID-19 right now, we also need to keep our eye on a range of other things. For example, the national terrorism threat has not changed; it remains at “probable”. We need to be prepared for that. That is why the McGowan government has invested over \$750 000—that is right; over three quarters of a million dollars—in a new bomb robot. It is 20 years since the Western Australia Police Force got a new bomb robot. It is a necessary piece of equipment in this day and age. As we have found out more and more, we are isolated in Western Australia. We need to have something of that nature to be able to respond. Members know how fast technology moves. The existing bomb robot is 20 years out of date; it weighs 400 kilograms and it is bulky and difficult to deploy to the regions. The new robot that we have recently taken delivery of weighs only 80 kilograms. It is much smaller. It can go on a plane, a bus or a train. It can be deployed by plane to Kalgoorlie, Broome or wherever it is needed. This is a big investment and part of our ongoing investment in providing Western Australian police with the tools they need to do the job.