

POLICE — ADDITIONAL OFFICERS

776. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to keeping Western Australia safe and strong through its significant investment in putting more police on our streets. Can the minister outline to the house what this government's investment in an additional 800 police officers will mean for community safety, both in the city and across regional WA; and update the house on how this investment builds on our government's record of ensuring that the Western Australia Police Force has the resources it needs to drive down crime?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:

I thank the member for Belmont for that question and for her commitment to keeping our community safe. Few issues are more important to the community than community safety—people being safe in their homes and safe as they go about their daily lives. This has been a priority for the McGowan government. Indeed, I know it has been a strong priority for the member for Belmont. I was happy to address a forum in her electorate only a year or so ago.

The fact of the matter is that when we came to government, we inherited a police force that was heading towards crisis. Month after month, we saw double-digit increases in crime. As the Treasurer well knows, the 2016–17 midyear review gutted the police budget. We were heading over a cliff in the out years. Although those opposite might like to blame the former Commissioner of Police or the former Deputy Commissioner of Police for the failed policing model that their government introduced, the fact of the matter is that those officers did not come up with the idea of changing the metro area from seven or eight districts down to just four mega districts. That was done as part of the Liberal–National government's cost-cutting measures.

By contrast, what a difference three and a half years has made! We have turned that around. We have added an additional \$755 million to the police budget. Most recently, of course, there is a \$314 million commitment to 800 more police officers in the budget. That is on top of the 300 officers that had already been committed to, and 150 of those are delivered straight off. There was no promise of additional police from the former government—none whatsoever. We could see the problems that were there and that the former government had its eye off the ball when it came to methamphetamine use in the community and what a driver of crime that was. That is why we committed at the election to 100 additional police for the meth border force and another 20 staff to back them up. That is why our police have been getting such outstanding results recently. Members would have seen an article on the front page of today's paper about the massive haul by WA police. I congratulate them for that. It was not by chance that they intercepted a truck in Sawyers Valley on Great Eastern Highway and uncovered \$4 million in two plastic tubs. They then went to a house in Lockridge and uncovered 13 one-kilogram bags of methamphetamine. That comes on top of many other drug seizures in our community. Indeed, only on the weekend it was highlighted that 10 kilos of meth had been taken from a home in Dianella and freezing notices had been placed on cash and so forth. This makes a huge difference in driving down crime.

The McGowan government puts a high price on our police force. It has supported our police force with extra police numbers; body-worn cameras, which cost \$17.8 million; personal-issue mobile devices and digital infrastructure, which had a total cost of some \$39 million; automatic number plate recognition; a bomb disposal robot; and personal-issue protective vests for every police officer in this state at \$19.2 million. That is something that police had been asking for for years, but it was not delivered until the election of the McGowan government. Few things are more important than keeping our community safe. That has been the priority for our government. We have not only reinstated the money that was gutted from the police budget by the former Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and now Leader of the Opposition, but also added \$755 million to support our police and to keep our community safe.