

WA POLICE — FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INCIDENTS — MINISTER
FOR POLICE'S COMMENTS

911. Mrs G.J. GODFREY to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the minister's previous comments in this house about how WA Police deals with domestic violence incidents. Can the minister advise the house how WA Police categorises family violence incidents and how it is dealing with such incidents?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for her advocacy for victims of domestic violence in her electorate and for her continued interest in these matters. In outlining my response I would like to clarify some previous comments that I have made with respect to the way police handle domestic violence.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Firstly, with respect to the categorisation of domestic violence issues, in December 2013, the statewide reporting requirements for incidences involving family and domestic violence relationships were amended. That was to ensure that family and domestic violence statistics were a contemporary reflection of the issue.

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It appears to me that the minister is reading from an official document. I call upon her to table it.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: They're my notes.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is a typed document from the minister's office. That is the kind of thing —

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Midland. Are those your notes, minister, or are they official documents?

Mrs L.M. Harvey: They are my notes, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: All right; carry on, please.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Did you write them?

The SPEAKER: Thank you. Carry on, please.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I write all of my notes.

Previously, reported family violence incidences included matters that are not considered to be the core of family and domestic violence issues. For example, prior to December 2013, assaults between adult siblings, distant cousins and other relatives were being recorded as family and domestic violence matters. Those broader relationship issues usually do not involve an imbalance in a relationship, which is when normal family violence occurs between immediate partners and intimate partners. The amended WA Police domestic violence policy states that an incident report must be submitted when any act of family and domestic violence as per section 6 of the Restraining Orders Act 1997 has occurred, importantly, between intimate and immediate family members. Notwithstanding those changes, we have seen reported family violence incidences grow, with or without a criminal offence.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: That number is continuing to grow in not only this state, but also other states around Australia.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the first time. No interjections—quick answer, please.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We know this because victims of family violence have more confidence now in reporting to police.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We know this is a result of the national strategy around family and domestic violence, with the Council of Australian Governments declaring family violence as a national priority. We know that high-profile campaigners against domestic violence such as Rosie Batty have increased the awareness of family violence.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We know that awareness has been raised as a result of the release of the state government's Freedom from Fear action plan, and also our initiatives in the Kimberley with the family violence regional plan.

Secondly, with respect to police structures in dealing with family violence, within the metropolitan area under the Frontline 2020 —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the second time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Under the Frontline 2020 model, the frontline officers are attached to response teams.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the third time. Minister, quick answer, thank you.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It is a really important issue and I understand that members on both sides of the house feel very passionately about family and domestic violence. That is why I have a comprehensive answer to the member for Belmont's question. The local policing teams provide the tasking support during peak periods and the response teams respond to domestic violence incidences. Victim support units operate during business hours within each of the four metropolitan policing districts.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The victim support units have an overview role and ensure there is compliance with policy, legislation and best practice in responding to family violence. The victim support units also work closely with local policing teams around incident management, ensuring there is interaction with the victims and that the victims are put in touch with people who can assist them with their family violence matters. Joint visits from other service providers are also coordinated through those units when it is required. The victim support units are co-located with officers from the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and other non-government service providers. These teams jointly form the family and domestic response teams. The role of those response teams is to jointly triage and assess the domestic violence incidences. They meet daily to identify pathways for victims and clients, and provide support and intervention strategies. Each district is managed 24/7 by a district control centre and its function is to play the critical supervisory role.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The teams are responsible for ensuring that quality primary investigation into family violence incidences occurs. They intrusively supervise the attending officers to ensure that they are initiating a quality primary investigation. They will then also do follow-ups.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members for Girrawheen and Albany! I want a very short wind-up, minister.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Those supervisors ensure and identify investigations that will need a secondary response. They also review all the incident reports and make recommendations as to whether there is enough information to proceed to a charge and they evaluate the evidence to determine whether prima facie evidence exists to facilitate a charge being initiated and also to approve any endorsement for change to the status of that investigation. We have put a range of measures in place to address family and domestic violence issues. The reform model has not yet been rolled out to regional Western Australia. Members in regional Western Australia will understand that the response to family and domestic violence is handled by the local police in the local stations. We remain committed to tackling family and domestic violence. The numbers are increasing, and that is of great concern to us. It is of great concern to every police minister across the country, and indeed our partners

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Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Speaker

in New Zealand. We will continue to keep the pressure on and we will continue to adjust our model to ensure we are getting right response for those victims.