

CENTRAL PARK, JOONDALUP — HOOLIGANISM

Grievance

MR J. NORBERGER (Joondalup) [9.24 am]: My grievance to the Minister for Police is about hooliganism and gang activities in Central Park, Joondalup. I thank the minister for listening to my grievance this morning and I appreciate the support she has shown me over the past 18 months in addressing law and order concerns in and around Joondalup.

Central Park is home to the Joondalup war memorial and is adjacent to the Joondalup Learning Precinct, directly opposite the Lakeside Joondalup Shopping Centre and a short walk to the Joondalup train station. The park is also flanked by apartments and businesses, such as Hans Cafe. It is a beautiful park, combining manicured lawns, man-made creeks, gardens and native bushland. Its proximity to the Joondalup Learning Precinct, Joondalup council, shops and residences make it a popular attraction. Unfortunately, my office has received an increasing number of complaints from concerned residents and business owners about the activities of a group of youths numbering between 20 and 30 and variously aged between young teens and adults. This group habitually loiters in the park and commits a wide variety of criminal activity, most commonly in the afternoon.

I have spoken to residents and business owners about the activities of this group. Based on such feedback, an example of what this group gets up to includes chronic public drinking. Every concerned member of the public with whom I have spoken has attested to the fact that the group always seems to be drunk and drinking in public. By about 6.00 pm on most nights the group is that inebriated that some members of the group need to be physically assisted by their friends to make it back to the train station. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this group is not from within Joondalup but, rather, from the Clarkson–Butler region and travels into Joondalup by train. Feedback that I have received indicates that the group used to loiter around the Joondalup train station until they were cracked down upon by the transit guards. Subsequently, the group has moved across the road to Central Park and seemingly made it its preferred new home. I have heard that Lake Joondalup Baptist College students who live along Lakeside Drive detour through the Edith Cowan University campus to avoid this park, having been attacked and asked for their wallets and phones in the past. Recently, I was told about a Malaysian exchange student who slowed down whilst driving along Grand Boulevard to allow the group of youths to cross the road, only to have his bonnet smashed, requiring him to quickly drive off to avoid any further damage or incident.

Students living in the ECU student village report being chased by the group of youths through Central Park and the West Coast Institute of Training campus during nights out. The Wanneroo–Joondalup Returned and Services League, of which I am a proud member, has informed me that recently the war memorial was badly defaced with graffiti, including lewd images of genitalia. I am sure that we do not need to be an ex-serviceman or woman to find that such behaviour goes against the very grain of what we Australians find acceptable.

A Tuesday and Thursday evening group fitness class for ladies has had regular run-ins with the youths over a long time, including having lewd and sexualised taunts yelled at them while they exercise, having youths urinating in front of them and having their parked vehicles tampered with. On two occasions bushland surrounding the park was set on fire and public sex acts have been committed in front of the fitness class. The group of youths has also been seen to conduct organised fights among themselves, which they video on their phones. Nearby businesses such as Hans Cafe have also suffered at the hands of these youths. Instances have been reported of the group harassing staff and patrons by requesting free food. The tips jar and the united fundraiser charity box were stolen from Hans Cafe's front counter. Hans Cafe staff resort to locking the front doors if they see the group approaching, which hardly makes patrons feel safe and comfortable inside.

As the minister can imagine, these reports are highly concerning to me. Although Joondalup is a growing city, it has nonetheless enjoyed very low levels of crime. Every expanding city experiences growing pains; however, the prevalence of the issues caused by this particular group of youths is giving the city centre an unnecessary bad reputation. Given the predictable nature of this group, I hope that with the minister's intervention more can be done to stamp out this behaviour. I would hate to think that this group could be allowed to gain a stronghold in Joondalup. As such, I beseech the minister to look into this situation and offer my community assistance. Naturally, as always, I would be delighted to host the minister for a visit to the park, and to perhaps meet with residents of the area to discuss law and order issues. I thank the minister for her consideration.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Police) [9.30 am]: I thank the member for Joondalup for raising this grievance on a very important issue for his electorate. I also thank him for the numerous representations on law and order, and road safety issues that he has made on behalf of his constituents. Antisocial behaviour in and around the Joondalup central business district has been an ongoing concern for WA Police and the community for a number of years. It is probably symptomatic of the growing population, and Joondalup becoming a large community hub. These issues are caused by a small collective of individuals who

gather in public areas on a semi-regular basis. As pressure is applied to the group, it moves away for a period of time and then returns. The member for Joondalup outlined the areas of most concern. WA Police advise me that it is concerned about the areas around the Joondalup train station, the adjoining Lakeside Joondalup Shopping City and Central Park, which includes the Joondalup War Memorial. The small group of individuals frequenting these areas move between them and other places in the region. WA Police is liaising with the Public Transport Authority, the Lakeside security service and the City of Joondalup. Despite efforts to manage and police these individuals, they continue to congregate and move between the aforementioned areas, engaging in the antisocial behaviour the member mentioned, some of which sounds like criminal offending. The intimidation of members of the public in these areas is of great concern.

Unfortunately, the issues and behaviours occur at times when the demand on police services is very high. It often occurs on weekend evenings when police resources are directed to matters of higher priority. That is not to say the police do not prioritise attempts to impact on the behaviour of these people, which is causing so much concern to the residents of Joondalup. Targeted police actions have been used in these areas, including the regional operations group, dog squad and the mounted section. The Joondalup police have introduced regular foot patrols on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. I believe these have been well received by the business community in the precinct.

A stakeholder meeting was held on Monday, 17 March at the City of Joondalup. Mayor Troy Pickard contacted me about the meeting. There was discussion, acknowledgement and agreement amongst all stakeholders about the need to address these issues in a more collaborative manner, using all the resources of local and state governments to crack down on antisocial behaviour. WA Police agreed to take a leadership role in focusing efforts to address the issues. I am very pleased that WA Police has stepped in to try to, if possible, put an end to this behaviour. WA Police are in the process of formulating an operation to concentrate resources and direct the effort of all stakeholders towards identifying individuals and addressing identified issues in the Joondalup central business district. More specifically, police will focus on the areas around Joondalup train station, Lakeside shopping centre and Central Park. The Public Transport Authority has also stepped up. It has appointed a new cleaning contractor, and the new cleaning tender will commence at the Joondalup train station in the week commencing 24 March. Consideration is being given to enhancing the security presence at Joondalup train station. As I said, a collaborative effort from all of the stakeholders will probably work best in this situation. Lend Lease has agreed to focus on the areas adjoining the train station by providing cleaning, general upkeep and further beautification of the paths and grounds. Further enhancement of closed-circuit television capabilities is being considered and a submission for funding is being prepared by the City of Joondalup for this purpose.

Today, there will be a pre-arranged police operation by the regional operations group, which will see the area subjected to very high visibility policing by approximately 25 additional officers on both day and afternoon shifts. This will be the first in an ongoing and concentrated policing effort to address the issues associated with these areas.

I thank the member for Joondalup for raising this matter with me, because speaking to WA Police about the local effort required to crack the back of these vexing issues has enabled it to focus its effort on strategies that will best provide a solution that is acceptable to the constituents of Joondalup. The additional 25 police officers will go a long way to addressing the problem through a targeted approach. The police operation will also work towards gathering evidence for the progression of prohibited behaviour orders against individuals who have been causing problems in Joondalup. Prohibited behaviour orders work very well to break up groups that engage in antisocial behaviour. If half of the group have PBOs in place, the group is split, its activities lose focus and it moves on. In any event, PBOs can prohibit members of the group from entering the Joondalup precinct, which I think will give considerable relief to the constituents and business owners of Joondalup, who find the antisocial behaviour of the group concerning and that it is impacting on the quality of life and amenity of the area.

I thank the member for raising this issue and am more than happy to come out to meet with Joondalup residents. I enjoy visiting Joondalup and meeting residents; I find that they raise concerns that help me ensure that we have the right policy approach to respond to these matters.