

POLICE — ENTERPRISE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

**478. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Treasurer:**

A number of constituents in my electorate of Scarborough have expressed their congratulations on the finalisation of the police enterprise bargaining agreement. Can the Treasurer please clarify the final negotiations for me?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL replied:**

I thank the member for her question and for the fact that she is obviously in touch with a lot of people in her electorate. Before I answer the question, it was drawn to my attention by my good friend the member for South Perth that the green and gold of the Como Primary School is in the gallery today. On his behalf, I welcome them here.

For the member for Scarborough I will give a brief overview of the time lines that sat around the recently concluded police wage negotiations. It is important that the house understands exactly what transpired. In April this year cabinet endorsed the parameters within which we would pursue bargaining outcomes with the police. I will go back one step. In March this year cabinet endorsed a new Western Australian government approach to wage negotiations. It was quite a departure from the approach adopted by the former government. Its wages policy was to neither lead nor lag. Another thing cabinet did, for better or for worse, was to ask me to lead government wage negotiations on EBAs across all government agencies. That is how it was handled for police, that is how it will be handled in December and that is how it will be handled next year with the nurses' EBA. I am sure the Minister for Health will be happy about that. There has been no attempt by government to sideline any minister in this process. The government has merely adopted a new process.

When I outline the time lines members will see that the process has already yielded significant benefits. In April cabinet endorsed parameters—the upper and lower limits—within which we would negotiate with the WA Police Union of Workers. Also in April I met with the president of the Police Union, Mr Mike Dean.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Did you speak to the minister?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** I most certainly did speak to the minister. I have spoken to the Minister for Police many times in the past few weeks about police wages.

Several members interjected.

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** We have a good cop, bad cop relationship on this issue. He is a very generous man. He has encouraged the government to take a generous approach in its negotiations with the police. It is not necessarily an approach that I have supported throughout.

I come back to the question. On 23 April the government's first offer of 9.8 per cent was made.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Did you fight him off with hobby bobbies?

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Was the member for Girrawheen, when she was Minister for Corrective Services, the person who, when asked in 2007 about an escape from a prison, said that it was from Fremantle Prison? Was she the person who, a couple of years ago, was supposedly across her portfolio but said that she thought there had been a mass escape from Fremantle Prison, when it had been shut for 10 years? Was that the member for Girrawheen or am I mistaken? I think it was the member for Girrawheen.

I come back to the question. On 22 May the police union advised the government that the offer was unacceptable—it had been rejected. Listen to this: on Friday, 29 May, formal negotiations began. In the period 22 May to 29 May—that is, one week—do members know what happened? The deal was settled. A two-week period elapsed between the commencement and finalisation of negotiations around the offer that we had sent. Two weeks; 14 days! It is a great outcome.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, member for Girrawheen!

**Mr T.R. BUSWELL:** Fremantle Prison—closed! We delivered an outcome in two weeks. It is a good outcome because of the time and because it respects and rewards police officers for the difficult job they do. It is a good outcome because it includes some productivity trade-offs from the police union around shifts and other details. It is a good outcome because it is within the parameters that cabinet endorsed back in April. We have been able to achieve a great outcome.

For one brief second let me compare it with what happened last time the police union negotiated with government. The process dragged on for six months. The former government made an offer in June 2006 and

resolved the offer in December 2006. It took six months to negotiate last time. Under this government's approach, it has taken two weeks.

Member for Scarborough, we are very pleased with the outcomes we have delivered in relation to the police enterprise bargaining agreement. We think it shows a marked point of difference between the approach of this government and the approach of the former government. No minister has been sidelined in this process. I want to stress this on the public record: the Minister for Police played an active role in supporting me as I led the negotiation process. It is a great outcome for government. I know it disappoints everybody over there that we achieved in two weeks what it took them six months to do. We are pretty pleased with that—and do members know who else is? The police officers of Western Australia.