

POLICE — CRIME SANCTION RATE

2120. Mr B.S. Wyatt to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the Minister's statement in the House on 20 March 2014 that in 2010–2011 police 'changed the way they calculate the sanction rate', and I ask:

- (a) how was the sanction rate calculated before police made the changes in 2010–2011;
- (b) what specifically did police change in 2010–2011 to the way they calculate the sanction rate;
- (c) why did police change the way they calculate the sanction rate in 2010–2011; and
- (d) was the sanction rate changed for all crimes, and if not, which crimes were affected by the change in the calculation of the sanction rate?

Mrs L.M. Harvey replied:

- (a) Prior to 2010–11, Western Australia Police reported on the clearance rate. This rate was calculated by dividing the number of reported offences cleared in a given period by the number of offences reported in the same period, expressed as a percentage.

The Western Australia Police Incident Management System (IMS) uses the following investigation outcomes to clear a reported offence:

- Offender processed — by way of arrest, charge, summons, Juvenile Justice Team referral, juvenile caution, drug caution or infringement.
 - Insufficient evidence — a person of interest is suspected but there is insufficient evidence to substantiate a charge.
 - Withdrawn — complainant chooses not to proceed with charges.
 - Mistakenly reported — e.g. complainant forgot where s/he had parked their car, reported it stolen only to later find it.
 - False report — complainant made a false report to police.
 - Statute barred — offender cannot be prosecuted due to being below the age of criminal responsibility, claims diplomatic immunity or the statutory period in which to commence a prosecution has expired.
 - Civil/other — matter is considered to be of a civil law nature, and also includes other circumstances where police are unable to proceed such as the offender has died; is in another jurisdiction and extradition is not desired or available; or has been admitted to a psychiatric facility.
- (b) In 2010–11, Western Australia Police changed from using the clearance rate to the sanction rate. The sanction rate is calculated by dividing the number of verified offences sanctioned in a given period by the number of verified offences reported in the same period, expressed as a percentage.

The calculation of the sanction rate differs from the clearance rate in two aspects. Firstly, it counts only verified offences not all reported offences, e.g. some offences may be mistakenly or falsely reported. Secondly, sanctioned offences exclude offences that have the investigation outcome of 'insufficient evidence' recorded against them.

- (c) Western Australia Police introduced the sanction rate as a result of research into how other national and international police jurisdictions define the conditions for an offence to be considered cleared or finalised. The conditions include that a crime has actually been committed and that there is sufficient evidence to charge or otherwise sanction a suspect. Noting that an offence can also be cleared administratively, i.e. there is sufficient evidence to charge a suspect with a crime, but due to circumstances beyond police control investigations are unable to continue and/or prevent the police from sanctioning the offender.

By excluding offences that are mistakenly or falsely reported, the sanction rate satisfies the first condition of counting only verified offences. By excluding the investigation outcome of 'insufficient evidence', the sanction rate satisfies the condition that there must be sufficient evidence to charge a suspect.

The sanction rate is more comparable to clearance rates used in other police jurisdictions and makes the reporting of crime investigation effectiveness more accurate. The term sanction rate was adopted to differentiate the change in methodology from the previous clearance rate used in Western Australia.

- (d) The sanction rate applies to all reported crime offence categories.