

Mr Rob Johnson; Mr John Kobelke; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Bob Kucera; Ms Sue Walker; Mr Terry Redman;
Mr Ben Wyatt; Chairman; Mr Paul Papalia

Division 22: Western Australia Police, \$928 063 000 —

Mr P.B. Watson, Chairman.

Mr J.C. Kobelke, Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Dr K.J. O'Callaghan, Commissioner of Police.

Mr C.J. Dawson, Deputy Commissioner, Operations.

Mr G. Italiano, Acting Executive Director.

Mr P.M. de Mamiel, Director of Finance.

Ms W. Murray, Director, Office of Crime Prevention.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Hillarys.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I refer to the subheading "Outcome: Lawful road-user behaviour" in the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators table on page 379 of the *Budget Statements*. This is a question I am transferring from the previous division because I was not able to get a satisfactory answer. The minister will probably have to answer by way of supplementary information. Can the minister supply the total number of traffic patrol hours, identifying which ones are part of the strategic traffic enforcement project, and the total number of vehicles stopped, including the number that have been stopped by STEP-funded patrols? I would also like information on drivers tested for drink-driving; drivers charged with drink-driving offences; seatbelt contacts; other traffic contacts; vehicles travelling over the speed limit and caught on speed cameras; and non-camera speed contacts, briefs, infringements and cautions. We have this documentation, which I am sure everybody has seen.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: What year does the question relate to?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: For the last financial year and this financial year to the end of April.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am happy to provide an answer by way of supplementary information. To be clear about what we are providing, we will provide the hours of road patrol for the traffic enforcement group, with a breakdown of what additional hours are provided through the STEP program. Does the member want calendar years or financial years?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I would like it to correspond with this documentation, which has come out —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Could the member just tell me the years he is working to?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: 2005-06, 2006-07 and whatever we can pull out for this part of 2007-08.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I would like it to cover all the areas in this document.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I do not know what is in the document.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Traffic patrol hours; number of vehicles stopped; vehicles monitored for speeding by speed cameras; vehicles caught travelling over the speed limit by speed cameras; non-camera speed contacts; briefs, infringements and cautions; drivers tested for drink-driving; drivers charged with drink-driving offences; seatbelt contacts; other traffic contacts; and vehicle work orders.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will provide by supplementary information that which I have already indicated and suggest that the rest would be best put as a question on notice.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It is all part of the same thing, minister.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister makes the decision about what happens.

[*Supplementary Information No A36.*]

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to the first and fifth dot points under "Significant Issues and Trends" on page 375. The first dot point states —

Continuing to improve the quality of intelligence data and systems available to the Western Australia Police as part of maintaining public safety and security.

The fifth dot point states —

Enhancing cross-jurisdictional and international policing partnerships for the purpose of preventing and responding to crime.

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I am sure the minister is aware that the federal government, in its wisdom, has slashed \$3 million from the previous government's crime initiative, which received funding in the vicinity of \$3 million each year, to assist state police in dealing with organised crime. It materialised in Western Australia in the form of intelligence officers and analysts. It concerns me that our federal colleagues have left us high and dry. I wonder whether the state will pick up the shortfall.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: To answer the member's question about the federal budget, the state government is still trying to seek clarity about the result. The member quite rightly alludes to an area of the Australian Federal Police from which the federal government has cut funding. However, the federal government says it will increase funding in other areas. We will check with the federal government about the net effect on Western Australia. Clearly, we have concerns. In my view the AFP has for years devoted an inadequate proportion of its resources towards working with WA Police. Although there is a good, cooperative relationship—I appreciate that—I do not think the decision-makers in Canberra have necessarily given Western Australia the allocation it should get. I will ask the commissioner to provide an answer to the member's wider questions relating to the dot points, because they are operational matters that I am not across.

Dr K.J. O'Callaghan: The federal government has imposed a 2.3 per cent efficiency dividend on many of its agencies. This will particularly affect the Federal Police and the Australian Crime Commission, both of which are organisations with which Western Australia Police work closely. We estimate that the cut to the Australian Crime Commission, which is responsible for dealing with organised crime, will be something like \$3 million, or 50 full-time employees across the country. Many of those people are employed as analysts. We expect that to have an impact on our capacity at the state level to respond to organised crime. That is the best information I can provide at the moment, based on what the Australian Crime Commission has told us. It is because of the federal government's efficiency dividend. We think there will be an impact on the Federal Police as well, and that may affect our airport deployment at some stage.

[3.30 pm]

Mr M.J. COWPER: I acknowledge that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services is still trying to work through the federal budget, but will he undertake to ensure that we do not lose those front-line people, such as analysts and intelligence officers? If we lose those people, we will lose corporate knowledge and the intelligence that exists. I wonder whether the minister would commit to maintaining a level of service in that area should the federal government —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I cannot give any commitment to federal resourcing and what might be done with that. Clearly, I can express the point of view of the Western Australian government on advice from the Western Australian Commissioner of Police. We may have an opportunity to reverse what has happened in the past. Quite often the commonwealth has attracted good officers from Western Australia Police to work in other areas; therefore, if the commonwealth is cutting back, we may be able to pick up some of those people who have expertise, if vacancies are available in Western Australia Police.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I refer to the "Employee benefits expenses" line item on page 395 of the *Budget Statements*. There is a reasonable increase in the out years for that line item. Can the minister advise whether a portion of those increasing costs will accommodate a future compensation program for injured officers?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The member for Yokine has quite rightly alluded to the post-separation benefits, but I do not think they can be discerned from that page of the income statement. However, the government is very committed to ensuring that not only serving police officers who are injured at work receive adequate benefits. I think there is general acceptance that we offer a good level of support for serving officers, but we have a major problem when those officers leave Western Australia Police and no longer receive that support. There may be act-of-grace payments available, but there is no system in place to support them. The member for Yokine has been a strong advocate of providing them with support. He has lobbied me on many occasions and I am sure he will continue to do so. I will ensure that we deliver benefits to people who leave Western Australia Police who were injured while serving and need that ongoing support.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Given that the government has promised to present a bill before this house for, I think, the past six years, when will a bill to deliver those services come before this place? What is the timetable for that?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am not sure about the part of the question that said six years; I have not been the minister for that long. I know we delivered on our promise for occupational safety and health coverage. I indicate to the member that we will introduce this bill as soon as possible in the not too distant future.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Can the minister give us some assurance that that bill will come before the house in this session of Parliament?

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Mr J.C. KOBELKE: That is certainly what we are targeting.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: So there is an assurance that that will be before the house —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: No, but we are targeting that. It has to go through a number of processes, but I have good reason to feel optimistic that we will be able to meet that target.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I refer to the capital works program on pages 392 and 393 of the *Budget Statements*. For some time now I have been asking for a new police station in the Nedlands electorate. The government closed one police station. A ship container is used for storage at the Subiaco station. The station does not have a charge dock; it is a mess. I am not criticising the police at all, but I think it would make it very difficult for them. I do not see a metropolitan police station amongst the works in progress and completed works on page 393. All the funding for works in progress has gone to country police stations —

Mr D.T. REDMAN: There are none in my electorate.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I know; I am looking at all the Labor seats the funding has gone to. We have been promised something for the past seven years, I remember, and I wonder what the minister will do about it.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The member has quite rightly pointed out that there is a problem with police stations in the western suburbs, which are largely within her electorate. We have a real issue with the police stations in that area being very old. Their level of operating capability is no longer really adequate for what we need today. Our officers in the western suburbs are often working under very trying circumstances with respect to the facilities with which they are provided. I am very much conscious of that. The second part of what the member said is incorrect, because there are a number of metropolitan stations listed on page 393, such as the police rail unit, Secret Harbour Police Station, Stirling Police Station, central metropolitan station —

Ms S.E. WALKER: No, minister, stations that have been completed.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: They are not completed, and I am sure the —

Ms S.E. WALKER: Construction is to commence on Secret Harbour.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: — member for Peel will make it clear to the member that his police station has not started yet.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I know; I can read. What I am saying is that the minister knows how dreadful the situation is in the western suburbs. Male and female police officers share the same toilets—with offenders. What will the minister do about it? Will he give my electorate a new police station and when?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Clearly not in this budget, but I am very conscious that the commissioner is giving priority to trying to put in place a plan for our police facilities so that we can properly work through the huge demands.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer to the appropriation and forward estimates on page 375 of the *Budget Statements*. My question will probably need to be referred to the Commissioner of Police or the deputy commissioner. My question arises to a certain extent out of some of the questioning of the Corruption and Crime Commission Commissioner this morning. He made the point that there must be referrals from the police to use the organised crime detection powers under the Corruption and Crime Commission Act. The Corruption and Crime Commission Commissioner made the point that there has been unofficial communication between the police and the CCC to try to get the existing powers under that act operational and being used. I wonder whether the minister or one of the deputy commissioners could comment on that.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will make some comments by way of general introduction and then leave it to the Commissioner of Police to respond. The Corruption and Crime Commission has an important oversight role in any complaints made against police officers. The general feedback I get from both the commissioner and the public is that the system works quite well. In most cases, the Corruption and Crime Commission allows the police internal affairs division to conduct inquiries into complaints, but the CCC has the ability to oversee and to take over those inquiries if it wishes. That process seems to work quite well. The issue relates to the powers we have given to the Corruption and Crime Commission to become involved in organised crime investigations. I know the CCC is champing at the bit to do more; however, the police clearly have a role and they are the lead agency. The police also have a partnership with the national anticorruption body—the Australian Crime Commission—which has similar, if not exactly the same, powers as the CCC. Therefore, police already have those powers, but I can understand from the Corruption and Crime Commission's point of view that it would like to use its powers in a more expansive way. I am not close to that relationship; therefore, it is appropriate for the commissioner to comment on that.

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Dr K.J. O’Callaghan: I refer the question to Deputy Commissioner Dawson, who is responsible for organised crime operations, to give a view of the management of that.

Mr C.J. Dawson: In terms of the organised crime operations, Western Australia Police have conducted several operations with the Corruption and Crime Commission under the auspices of the legislation. However, it is true that we have expressed our view that there are some difficulties with the definition of “organised crime” under the Corruption and Crime Commission Act. That matter was raised through a number of submissions under the statutory review of the Corruption and Crime Commission Act conducted by Gail Archer. As members will be aware, the report of that review has been completed. We are looking forward to some amendments being made based on that report. We have had some close and cooperative discussion with the Corruption and Crime Commission about that and also the interoperability of our respective agencies. However, I can indicate by way of a very topical example—namely, the four arrests made in the past 72 hours in relation to a large seizure of ecstasy—that Western Australia Police is working with other jurisdictions and other agencies. In that case, we worked very closely with the Australian Crime Commission, which has very similar powers, and we have been regularly utilising that agency’s organised crime and coercive enabling powers. Although we have an ongoing, very fruitful relationship with some of the federal crime-fighting bodies, we would seek to expand that in line with the desire of the Corruption and Crime Commission. We will be seeking to make it clearer by making some amendments to the report that Ms Archer was responsible for authoring.

[3.40 pm]

Ms S.E. WALKER: Is it true that the Commissioner of Police currently has the power to undertake investigations at the same level as the CCC?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: No.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Can the CCC do more?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The CCC has coercive powers that the police do not have.

Ms S.E. WALKER: In relation to questioning?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Yes. As the deputy commissioner indicated, often the police work with the Australian Crime Commission because these issues of organised crime go across jurisdictional borders. Therefore, the ACC, as a national body, can certainly have contact with all the states, whereas the CCC is really not in that game. The issue is that when coercive powers or broader intelligence are required, the police can work cooperatively with the Australian Crime Commission, the Australian Federal Police and police in other jurisdictions, because organised crime is Australia-wide. The CCC, as the deputy commissioner indicated, has those powers, and the police have, on a limited number of occasions, engaged with the CCC to work together on an inquiry.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I am not saying that I advocate, and I do not, that that power be shifted from the police commissioner. Would it enhance the situation? From what the minister said, the police are already able to use other resources to give themselves the power that the CCC has. Is that what the minister said?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I do not think that there is a simple answer to that. We are always looking to assist the police, and enhancing their capability is part of that. That is done in a range of ways. It may be resourcing, changing the law, putting in place surveillance operations or coercing people to answer questions. All these things are part of the armoury, and we seek to enhance that. I have indicated that the police already have a good working relationship with the ACC. The enhancement of working better with the CCC may be in a slightly different way. These are the things that we need to explore.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Does the minister not want to transfer the powers?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: When the member says “transfer the powers”, I do not think the Archer recommendation that the government is taking up goes that far. It is actually to free up, so that the joint operations between the CCC and Western Australia Police could take place more easily. It is not a transferring of powers so that the CCC would take over the role of WA Police with organised crime.

Ms S.E. WALKER: Which is what the CCC would like.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: That is certainly not what the government agreed to in terms of the Archer recommendations.

Ms S.E. WALKER: I understand.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I refer to the third dot point under “Significant Issues and Trends” at page 375, which states —

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Continuing to focus on maximising officer availability for frontline policing.

The minister would be aware that I and my colleagues are very focused on regional Western Australia. I have a couple of questions that I will pull together for reasons of expediency. Over the past couple of years, the staffing in the great southern district has been consistently down on complement, to the tune of 14, 15 or 16. A recent issue that was highlighted in Cranbrook when we looked at staffing numbers in the area was that Tambellup had only one officer out of a complement of three; Wagin, four out of a complement of seven; and Pingelly, one out of a complement of three. My first question relates to the level of staffing in regional areas. We are aware of the difficulties with recruitment and staffing across the board. We fear that one of the first areas in which that will manifest itself is regional Western Australia. Clearly, the policing front line is no exception. I am interested in what the police department is doing in response to that. Secondly, the minister is aware of the closure of six police stations in my region, including one at Cranbrook, which is in my electorate, and one at Dumbleyung, in the member for Wagin's electorate. It worries us that the difficulty in staffing regional areas, in particular, will be a factor in the review of the police stations which the commissioner has undertaken to do and which will, I understand, come to fruition in a short time. The response I have had on a number of occasions suggests that staffing is not a basis for making that decision. When I looked at staffing in the great southern, I could not help think that it must be a factor.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will answer the question on the philosophical approach and I will ask the commissioner to answer the question about police stations that have been closed. The point the member alludes to involves Frontline First, which has been a great success for the police. It was put in place by the commissioner. That program ensures that police resources are serving the community in the most effective way. Many elements were attached to implementing Frontline First. It also means looking at the placement of officers. It does not necessarily mean that more officers in one area, scattered in small numbers, will give the most effective policing. Although it gives a sense of comfort to people in a small town to know that they have a police station in their town, the operational necessities might mean that there is not a police officer in the town for the majority of the time. They may be patrolling the roads or on leave, in which case there is no backup because the demand does not warrant it. The commissioner has to deploy his officers to areas where the demand is and where he can get the best results. Clearly, the crime levels in the great southern show that the police are being very effective. The results are being delivered. I appreciate that in some towns people feel that they are being overlooked because there has been a reduction in the number of police designated to that town, even though they might not be living there. I have not been presented with any evidence to show that the effectiveness of policing has been reduced. There is evidence in a number of areas that the new approach is delivering better results through that area.

I fully support the issue of getting operational effectiveness. I have indicated previously that I was concerned several years ago when the Nollamara Police Station, in my electorate, was closed. What happened there is slightly different from what is happening in the country. We are saying that we get better operational effectiveness by having fewer large stations, so that the police can be deployed where the real action is and they can back up each other and cover for other officers when they are on other duties, whether it be court duties, leave, training or whatever. In the case of a number of smaller stations, people are always being moved from one station to another to cover the holes, and the operation is ineffective. The whole approach that is being taken will deliver better policing. I will ask the commissioner to comment on the towns in the great southern to which the member referred.

Mr M.J. COWPER: When Nollamara was closed, the number of assaults against the person and damage offences went up.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I do not think that is true.

[3.50 pm]

Dr K.J. O'Callaghan: I will make a general comment on country police stations—I know that we have spoken about this publicly previously. There will always be tension between the economics of keeping a police station open in regional Western Australia, where there is not much crime and there are not many incidents to be reported, and the social dividend from having a police station in the town. It is probably no different from having a school or any iconic government agency in a town. One of the challenges for us is how we deliver those services fairly across regional Western Australia, given that there is significant growth in many parts of regional Western Australia and no growth in others. We have put 72 more officers into regional Western Australia since I have been commissioner. Many of them have gone to towns that are part of the mineral and resources boom. We are seeing that in the north west and through the south of Western Australia. Nine multifunctional remote police stations have been established in regional Western Australia. Overall, the numbers have gone up, but there are tensions in smaller towns in terms of the economics of keeping open those small stations in small communities. We are of the view that we could probably provide an adequate service to those towns without having the police

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stations open, notwithstanding that I have agreed to review the decision to close those police stations in July this year. That is about 12 months, or a little more than 12 months, after we made the decision to close them. In fairness to local government and communities, we will revisit the decision in July and role out the statistics, talk about what is happening in the towns and make a further decision. I think it is fair to say that Menzies and Gascoyne Junction will probably not be reopened under any circumstances. We have reserved the right to negotiate with the community and local government on the other four police stations that have been closed, and we will do that.

I want to make the point that staffing is not a consideration in this matter. Whether or not it is easy to get people to serve in regional Western Australia is not a factor that we consider in determining whether to keep a police station open. We have been trying to resolve a series of issues in those towns in regional Western Australia to which we cannot attract police officers. The member mentioned Wagin. Wagin Police Station has been running below staff numbers for probably 12 months now. Part of the problem is that we cannot attract police officers to that town. We are having a similar problem in South Hedland. In fact, in most of the towns whose name begins with “M”, with the exception of Margaret River—for example, Moora, Merredin, Meekatharra etc—we are having a problem attracting people. We are looking at providing different types of incentives to encourage police officers to work in those towns. That includes rent-free accommodation, and changes in the enterprise bargaining agreement to their conditions of work. However, it is a challenge. It is a generational challenge for us. It is a challenge of the gen-Ys, because the younger police officers coming into the agency do not want to be far away from services. That will present us with a challenge in the future. However, that will not prevent us from making decisions about whether to keep police stations open, or close them.

The CHAIRMAN: I have a question. I refer to page 376. The fourth dot point on that page, which comes under the heading “Significant Issues and Trends” at page 375, states —

Maintaining state-wide information technology and regional radio communications services as a result of equipment obsolescence.

Police communications is a real problem in the great southern, because the police radios break down regularly. Has any money been allocated in this budget to deal with this problem?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I thank the member for the question. WA Police has now completed the rollout of the police metropolitan radio network. That has resulted in a huge increase in efficiency for the police who are using that system in the metropolitan area. However, the regional radio network is some 25-plus years old, and it has been very difficult to maintain that network in full operational order, because the equipment is basically obsolete. The commissioner has certainly indicated that that is a very high priority. The full business case for new equipment was not actually presented as part of the budget process, so that has not been funded, and there is no money in this budget for it. However, the commissioner is pushing very hard and is saying that it is critical that we address this issue. We will, therefore, be looking at how we can keep the current radio network for the regional areas outside Perth in good working order, while at the same time moving towards rolling out an upgraded system. Clearly, in a state as large as Western Australia it will not be possible to roll out that system across the whole state. However, there is clearly a need to upgrade the radio network for the population centres in regional areas, and that will be treated as a priority.

The CHAIRMAN: Is it a concern for the minister and the commissioner that police officers may be out of radio contact with their base when they are working either on their own or in pairs?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It certainly is a concern. There are other ways in which we can try to fill the gap, but it certainly is a gap that needs to be filled. We are trying to put in place a more permanent and longer-term solution than just the stop-gap measures that we are using currently.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I also want to refer to page 376. The third dot point on that page, which also comes under the heading “Significant Issues and Trends” at page 375, states in part —

Meeting increased demands on policing resources as a result of changes to legislation and other initiatives . . .

Our police officers are now being asked to take on a lot of additional tasks. Therefore, there is obviously a need for more police officers to enable them to cope with that increased workload. Is the minister able to give us the figure, as at 30 April, for the total number of sworn police officer FTEs, excluding any officers on leave without pay or on long-term sick leave? The minister can provide that by way of supplementary information if he likes.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am very pleased to inform the member that as at the end of April, there were 5 265.6 FTEs. That excludes officers on leave without pay. That is 371 more than in February 2005. We made a promise to provide an additional 350 police officers. That is 371 police officers above the February 2005 figure. There

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clearly will be some attrition over the next few months, and even though more police will be coming through the Western Australia Police Academy, it will still be an ongoing battle to maintain that additional 350. I am sure the member is very pleased that between February 2005 and the end of April 2008, we have grown the police FTE strength in the community by 370, which is some 21 over the promise that we made.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am over the moon, minister! However, as the minister has said, there will be some attrition. What has been the attrition rate in the past six months?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Attrition is a month-by-month proposition.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What has been the attrition rate in the past six months? That will be some sort of guide as to how many police officers we will have in the next few months.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am happy to give the member some numbers. The commissioner has some of these figures in his head. However, if the member wants a fuller set of numbers, we can provide that on notice.

Dr K.J. O'Callaghan: I do not have the exact numbers. We may be able to provide that for the member. I can tell the member that the rate of attrition is going down significantly. In April and May this year, we had the lowest attrition rate that we have had for some years. It was down to 16 or 18—very close to where we were about three years ago. There has been a decline. The attrition rate has declined from 26 in December, 37 in January and 31 in February, to 15 in March and 18 in April, so it has gone down in the past two months.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is very good. Can the minister supply—he will probably need to do this by way of supplementary information—the figures for the authorised police strength in all our police regions, and the actual strength in those regions? The minister has supplied that information in the past.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I would ask the member to put that question on notice.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Come on! This is budget estimates! Most ministers normally agree to provide supplementary information. I am asking a very simple question. I am sure the commissioner could answer it standing on his head. He does not need the minister to be obnoxious about it. I am simply asking —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: This question has been asked on notice previously. If the member puts it on notice, it will be answered again.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am putting it on notice now. I am asking the minister whether he will please provide that by way of supplementary information. What is the minister afraid of?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am just saying we will answer it if the member puts the question on notice.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The minister is hopeless! He really is!

The CHAIRMAN: It is for the minister to make that decision.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The minister really is hopeless. The minister is the most secretive minister I have ever known. Does the minister know that? The minister is completely non-transparent.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have a question that relates to service 2, “Crime Prevention and Public Order”, at page 382. The second dot point under the heading “Major Achievements For 2007-08” at page 383 refers to the establishment of the southern rail unit. I have spoken to the officer in charge of that unit recently. He has acknowledged that the unit received a flurry of media attention when officers from that unit arrested two blokes in Kwinana, but it would appear that the unit has now suddenly disappeared off the radar. Can the commissioner give us an indication of the success of that unit subsequently?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: When it comes to how we gauge success, I will turn to the commissioner, because I do not have a measure of that. I do know that the commissioner has allocated 50 police to that southern rail unit. The member will find on another page of the *Budget Statements* that moneys have been allocated to build accommodation for those officers, because they are currently working, as I think the member would know, out of rented accommodation in the Rockingham area. There are about 140 000 passenger movements a week on the Perth to Mandurah rail. The unit has apprehended 1 173 offenders and has laid 2 403 charges in the first six months of operation. In terms of gauging the effectiveness of the unit, I will ask the commissioner to make a comment.

Dr K.J. O'Callaghan: I think the numbers speak for themselves—1 173 offenders apprehended and 2 403 charges laid is significant work for what is really the first six months of operation of this southern rail unit. That is how we would gauge its effectiveness.

Mr P. PAPALIA: These officers also operate beyond the extent of the rail, do they not? They are not confined to the rail line itself?

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Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will ask the commissioner to answer that.

Dr K.J. O'Callaghan: They do not operate just on the rail system. They also operate beyond the rail, often alongside it or in close proximity to it, and they also operate in the feeder areas. We also use those officers to assist with other major events when they occur, such as Lotterywest Skyworks, and a range of other events.

[4.00 pm]

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to the third dot point on page 375 of the *Budget Statements*, which states —

Continuing to focus on maximising officer availability for frontline policing,

I will touch upon frontline policing for a moment. When I was at the police operations centre, we used to attend to 400 000 jobs a year, which is around 36 000 jobs a month. In recent years there has been an increase of 22 per cent in the number of jobs that are being attended by police officers; I understand that on some occasions they have attended somewhere in the vicinity of 55 000 jobs a month. This represents a significant increase in the demand for police services, and I note that there is a 12.5 per cent increase in funding, which is a deficit of around about 10 per cent on police requirements. What is the government doing to bring in legislation that could alleviate the need for the commissioner to appoint police officers to certain positions within the police department that now can only be carried out by sworn officers? I know of a number of areas that could be addressed, such as the appointment of paralegals to prosecute matters, which would realise in the vicinity of 60 additional police officers for frontline duties. I am aware that in Western Australia telephone intercepts are all done by sworn officers, whereas in every other state and territory of Australia they are done by civilian staff, and in some cases they are deputised in certain roles. There was also the onerous legislation that the government was going to bring to this place some time ago which would have meant that there would be in the vicinity of 14 police officers running around issuing \$100 infringements for speeding motorists captured by Multanovas, when they could be doing better things with their time —

The CHAIRMAN: Is there a question, member?

Mr M.J. COWPER: The question is: what is the government doing by way of legislation to allow the police to utilise their sworn staff better?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It certainly is an issue, but I am not sure whether the member is right in thinking that the main way of resolving this is by introducing legislation. In addition to the 350 additional police whom we have funded and now have as sworn officers, we also funded 160 public servants so that they could take on some roles to free up sworn officers for frontline duties. About 150 public servants have already been allocated or employed. Not every one of those goes straight into a spot and the officer moves onto the frontline, but we are making sure that we can get those greater efficiencies so that sworn officers can fulfil a fuller role as sworn officers, rather than doing jobs that can be done by public servants. That has already taken place. I think the member is right to suggest we could do with more funding to provide more public servants, but I am not sure that legislative changes are necessary to help that along. It might in some small way —

Mr M.J. COWPER: Paralegals are one example; obviously, this involves funding lawyers to do the prosecuting jobs that are currently done by police officers —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I do not think there is any problem in having that done, because the commissioner has started a working relationship with the Director of Public Prosecutions so that they can work cooperatively on that. I believe there is still great scope to take that further so that we can have more police officers.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I have acknowledged that the government has increased the police budget by 12 per cent; but police jobs have gone up by 22 per cent, meaning they have suffered a net loss of 10 per cent. Their burden is greater; therefore, more staff must be found. Only 300 can be pumped through the police academy per annum.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The member has raised two points. First of all, as I indicated, my understanding is that changes to the legislation are not a major factor in ensuring that police officers can be used on what are generically called frontline duties. The issue is more one of having the resources to put public servants in behind them. I am not sure whether the second part of the member's question is logically correct. The fact is that there is a lot more action by police in the community—they are receiving a lot more calls. It is not as simple as saying that there has been this percentage growth in resources and it is not matching the demand; there is also an efficiency factor to be taken into account. For instance, there is now a call centre in place, which means a lot more calls coming through —

Mr M.J. COWPER: Police have still got to be on the roads to do the jobs. There might be a very efficient call centre —

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Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The police are getting a lot more calls that were out there that previously they simply were not responding to. There are more police and a more efficient system —

Mr M.J. COWPER: I concede that, but there can be all the calls under the sun —

The CHAIRMAN: Member!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: — and they are actually logging more calls. It is not necessarily a higher level of criminal activity out there, but the police are now able to address more of those calls. That flows through into more arrests, and because of that we actually get the result that burglaries and a whole lot of those major crimes, the volume crimes, have been driven down because the police are being far more effective with the extra numbers and resources and the greater efficiencies.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Will the minister please explain to me why we need 30 sworn police officers to monitor telephone intercepts? Why do they have to be sworn officers? I will tell the minister why: the legislation says so. The commonwealth provides for civilian staff to do it, but only this state has this legislation. This is something that the government could do to release 30 police officers —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will repeat that the advice I am getting is that sworn officers do not have to do all those jobs; there are some requirements for a sworn officer, but not necessarily all those positions —

Mr M.J. COWPER: Why are 30 needed?

The CHAIRMAN: Member!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am saying that 30 officers are not necessarily needed to do that work, although that is how the unit is currently resourced. As I have already indicated, if non-sworn officers were put into those positions, the issue would be about providing the resources for the people who could do that; but they do not, in all cases, have to be sworn officers.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I have one last further question on the same point, and it relates to the ability to staff police services on the ground, for which there is a great demand in the metropolitan area. The sad part about it, as my colleague —

The CHAIRMAN: A question, member, not a statement!

Mr M.J. COWPER: — the member for Stirling says, is that the officers are taken from the country. If it is a case of resources, why is the government taking four officers from the regional crime squad—the old stock squad—to rob Peter to pay Paul?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: As I indicated earlier, the commissioner has the responsibility of deploying his staff to maximum effectiveness —

Mr M.J. COWPER: He is robbing Peter to pay Paul because the minister will not give him the staff to do it —

The CHAIRMAN: Member!

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: — and I have great confidence that he is doing that. I will leave it to the commissioner if he wants to comment —

The CHAIRMAN: The member will be called to order if he keeps that up! Minister.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The fact is, member, that quite often people perceive that they are not getting a service because there is a change, but some time later they realise that the change has actually been a very effective and productive one, and it irks them to think that they thought they were losing something and it has proved not to be true. The perception has proved to be very different from the reality. Although I am not saying that every change that is made administratively in reallocating police always has the desired effect, on the whole I think we are getting a more efficient police —

Mr M.J. COWPER: The minister has offered 38 police officers to the Secret Harbour —

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Murray knows better than to interject in that manner.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I ask the commissioner to comment on the stock squad.

Dr K.J. O’Callaghan: In answering the question about the deployment of the rural crime squad, the member understands that there are different pressures that arise in policing from time to time; currently, there are significant pressures in the sex crime area. Much of that has arisen out of what has been reported in some of the communities in the north west of WA, and so we are having to respond to that as a matter of priority, which means that I have to sometimes reallocate resources. The issue is that reallocation of resources is not simply

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about abandoning a service altogether. One of the things we considered before removing the rural crime squad was whether we could provide the service in a better way. The rural crime squad is a four-person unit based in Midland that services the whole state, so it is already disadvantaged by distance and sheer numbers. The issue for us is whether we can provide the same or a better service by using properly trained regional detectives—because they are not properly trained at the moment—to provide the same service that the rural crime squad was providing. We made an internal assessment of that, and that decision is subject to a 12-month review to ascertain whether we could better provide that service—which deals with theft of stock, theft of fuel from farms and things like that—by using local detectives who are trained in that type of work. That is what we are working through at the moment. The four members of the previous centralised rural crime squad have now been moved to the sex crime division.

[4.10 pm]

Mr M.J. COWPER: In response to that, would an additional 30 members from the telephone intercepts division be of value to the commissioner in deployment?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I have already tried to point out that I do not think the basis of the member's question is correct; that is, we have put 350 additional sworn officers in and we have put 150 of the 160 extra public servants in to back them up. The member might take issue with the efficient allocation of those resources. As I have indicated, I think the commissioner is doing a great job in how he allocates resources. When decisions are made in large organisations every decision does not always turn out to be exactly as hoped. Sometimes we do not get it quite right, but overall we are seeing a much more effective and efficient police service. That relates to how those resources are allocated right across the state.

MR D.T. REDMAN: The commissioner mentioned that there was a focus on training some of the local detectives. I assume that would include stock identification and other things that are peculiar to rural areas. Can the minister provide me with information relating to the resources that will go into supporting that training, even by way of additional information?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will ask the commissioner to answer.

Dr K.J. O'Callaghan: We have asked the four detectives who were formerly part of the rural crime division to work up a training package or curriculum so that we can move that information out to detectives in regional Western Australia. That will be provided in two ways. Firstly, it will be provided as part of initial detective training; and, secondly, we would have to move out a computer-based package for the existing detectives in regional Western Australia to respond to. It also involves getting the local police themselves to do more work around stock waybills.

It is fair to say that some of that work has slipped away over the past few years. We can up the ante by creating a better training regime for regional detectives by getting local police to check stock waybills and get them used to what they should be looking for. It is specialised work; it is not necessarily easy work and we recognise there is a training component with that.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I refer the minister to the third dot point on page 376 of the *Budget Statements*. That dot point relates to meeting increasing demands and I presume that service 5, "Response to and Investigation of Offences", would apply to it. I note the minister has increased demands in relation to the Prostitution Act 2000. What level of resources is currently applied to policing prostitution by the police service?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Good question.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I think the member is aware that there is already a unit within police that covers street prostitution. It has been very effective in solving problems that were evident in certain suburbs close to the city. That is only one part of it. I think what the member is alluding to is the new prostitution legislation that relates to licensing. That licensing will require clearances for people to work within brothels and police will have to play a role in the resources required for that. Deputy Commissioner Dawson would be best able to give a more detailed answer.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Just before he starts, I have a further question following on from this. Is the vice squad still in action or has that been disbanded?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: That has been reorganised. Deputy Commissioner Dawson could also answer that part of the question.

Mr C.J. Dawson: A number of matters were mentioned that the minister has already alluded to. We do have a street crime unit that looks at the streetwalking prostitution issues, predominantly in the CBD. That has been a very successful unit that has —

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Mr R.C. KUCERA: I am not —

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Yokine, do not interject on an adviser at all, at any time. Please resist the urge. Deputy Commissioner Dawson.

Mr C.J. Dawson: That unit has apprehended a number of persons associated with the Prostitution Act 2000. One of the member's questions related to the vice squad. There is no vice squad per se. Former Police Commissioner Matthews disbanded that particular vice squad. However, attention to the issues of organised crime and prostitution has fallen to the organised crime division. The number of officers who are dedicated and allocated to that area is dependent upon the jobs at hand. In addition to that, we have a number of analysts within the state intelligence division that have specific responsibilities to provide intelligence around organised crime and particularly the trafficking of persons for prostitution. That has resulted in a number of operations there.

Lastly, the specific requirements that we are now scoping in terms of the new legislation fall within the licensing enforcement division, which the commissioner implemented about 12 months ago. They fall within the specialist crime portfolio. We are examining the number of persons who might potentially fall within the scope of the new legislation. We estimate that to be about 2 000 persons connected with what I might call the sex industry. In that sense, they will fall to the centralised body of officers under the licensing enforcement division. We presently have about 50 officers within that division. That will not be their sole purpose; they will also look after other commercial licence holders such as the old commercial agents squad, which the member would be familiar with.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: What is their role?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: There is a list of operations like the vehicle squad, but perhaps Deputy Commissioner Dawson might provide a fuller list.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: It is the licensing division I am referring to.

Mr C.J. Dawson: The remit of the licensing enforcement division is to capture all mercantile-type licences, such as second-hand dealers, commercial agents, security agents and security guards, firearms dealers, pawnbrokers, inquiry agents—a number of licences that the Commissioner of Police or other bodies are required to licence. We are folding in the new legislation so that there is one centralised body of expertise to look at the intelligence issues. We believe we can get greater efficiency by having a centralised, dedicated unit. There are often a number of dual licence holders that these people or businesses operate under.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I am told by various taxidivers and other people within my electorate that there is a somewhat large brothel at the corner of Scarborough Beach Road and Charles Street, opposite one of the major nightclubs. What will be the role under the new legislation of that particular unit in relation to that brothel?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The legislation actually does not sit with police; it is the liquor licensing area that is going to have carriage of the legislation. The police will be involved in not only whatever clearances may be required, but also enforcement matters, as Deputy Commissioner Dawson indicated, when there is any connection with organised crime or any connection with trafficking in people for sexual servitude. All those matters clearly are for police. The police will be working with that other agency, which clearly has the key responsibility for rolling out that legislation.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Police will be working with the dog rangers from local government and other people like that to make sure —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: That will depend as the particular cases arise. As I have already indicated, and the member is well aware, issues of organised crime and issues in which there is a clear breach of criminal law will involve the police. They will be the primary responders. The actual area of licensing is not invested with police.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: I refer the minister to the last dot point on page 376, which states —

Addressing accommodation issues (short and long-term requirements) in order to optimise policing resources.

I assume that refers to comments the commissioner was making earlier about incentives; and, if it is not, my question relates to incentives for police officers to move and live in the regions. I am interested in the level of activity or resource that the department is putting into opportunities to give incentives for people in the regions beyond housing. I know that housing is a big issue and that it goes right across the service sector. Firstly, I am interested in whether there are some resource allocations in this round of budget towards that. Secondly, some other incentives may well be under discussion. I highlight that it is a significant issue. People in the regions feel somewhat concerned about the level of services provided on a raft of government fronts. One issue is the capacity to get people to stay in the regions to provide those services.

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[4.20 pm]

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The dot point does not allude to that issue, so I will speak briefly to the dot point and then respond to the member's question, which is a very valid one. The dot point relates to police stations and a range of other facilities that police need and the problem with meeting those needs. One example is the storage area for property that needs to be held because it was involved in the commission of a crime, it is evidence relating to a crime, or it has been seized under the confiscation legislation. Currently, much of that property is stored in an old hangar at Maylands, which is totally inadequate. The police want to rent a large warehouse area and fit it out as a much more modern storage area. That is one example of the many accommodation needs for police officers and their equipment. That is what the dot point is really all about. There are some real challenges there, and the member for Nedlands alluded in part to that issue at some of the old police stations.

The member's question goes to housing accommodation for police officers in regional areas. It is an issue. There is money in this budget for it. I am not saying that that will fix all the problems, but it is recognition of the problems. Incentives were built into the last enterprise bargaining agreement to try to attract officers to hard-to-staff areas. The commissioner may wish to say a bit more about the accommodation issues.

Dr K.J. O'Callaghan: There are several issues in attracting people to regional WA. Accommodation is obviously high on the list. One of the things that stop police officers from wanting to take up positions in regional WA is the standard of accommodation in some towns where there is no growth. There is generally very good accommodation in towns such as Karratha and Port Hedland because there is a lot of growth in those towns. In many of the wheatbelt towns there is not a lot of growth. We have worked very strongly with local governments in many of those towns and they have been able to come to the party with new, modern housing that is appropriate for families to move into. We are seeing a lot of support from local governments because local governments, of course, are very keen to have police remain in their towns and do not want the towns to run low on police officers. When we have spoken to the employees of WA Police, we have found that a high standard of affordable housing is high on their list of what attracts them to regional WA. I mentioned earlier that we had made the accommodation in several locations in regional WA rent free. There is a bit of a challenge in doing that because it is one thing to make rent-free accommodation available in difficult to fill areas, but if it is extended to other parts of regional WA that are not difficult to fill, such as Broome or Exmouth, the incentive to go to those more difficult to fill areas is removed. There is always a bit of a challenge as to how far we take things such as rent-free accommodation.

We have implemented an extension of the 44-hour week in many parts of regional Western Australia that did not have it previously. That means that police officers work an extra day a fortnight and that is a significant amount of money for them. It could amount to \$300 extra in their pay a fortnight. That is an added incentive. Different types of on-call and officer in charge allowances were enshrined in the last EBA, so we have looked specifically at that matter. Police officers in very remote locations are paid 30 per cent more than other police officers in Western Australia, so that is also a significant incentive. The challenge for us is how we continue to provide those incentives and attraction packages for police officers to go to regional WA, so we are looking at what other government agencies, such as the Department of Education and Training, provide to their employees. We are working through that. It will remain an ongoing challenge for us.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The minister said that there were resources in the budget. Can he identify those resources for comparative reasons, even if it is by way of supplementary information?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will try to get what we have on that. One item I have information on is the general cost increases in building leases. There was an amount of \$3.369 million, but that may go more to police stations or rented offices, not accommodation. Just over \$2 million in additional money was provided for GROH.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Is that largely focused on accommodation?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: GROH includes police officer housing.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I refer to the major policy decisions listed on page 376. The first line item in the table is "Advertising — Recruitment Campaign". An amount of \$800 000 will be spent on that campaign this financial year. If I were being cynical, I would say that that is because we are in an election year. There is nothing in the forward estimates up to 2012. Why is there no funding in those years?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It definitely does not relate to an election year. I can provide the amounts that were spent in previous years. As the member knows, we have had to meet the challenge of providing an extra 350 officers, and I have indicated that we have passed that target. The advertising campaign is part of encouraging that recruitment. The recruitment campaign has been assisted in a major way by encouraging police to come from overseas. However, we want to ensure that we encourage a high component of local Western Australians to join

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WA Police. Because we are still part of that build, we will be advertising. I am happy to provide the member with information on the amounts we have spent in previous years if he wants it, but I do not have it in front of me.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I want to know whether the recruitment campaign advertising will be in Western Australia, the United Kingdom, Ireland or other countries; and, if so, can the minister give me a breakdown of what that \$800 000 represents? Can he also tell me why he has not allocated any funds for the forward years?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I do not have the figures for past years, but we certainly have spent money in recent years. The reason there is no allocation for the out years is that we have not announced our build or how many extra officers it is likely we will want to attract. Until we know how many more officers we will want to attract, we will not put money into an advertising campaign to try to attract them. The strategies include WA statewide media placement in the press and on radio and television; a campaign targeting minorities; national targeted press campaigns; international targeted press campaigns in the UK, South Africa, New Zealand, Canada and the United States later in 2008; a national-international joint campaign; participation in the Go West Now campaign, which was run in Melbourne, Sydney and New Zealand; a statewide press campaign called Which Badge Are You, a joint partnership with the Department of Corrective Services and the Public Transport Authority, which are obviously seeking officers; a statewide “We reckon You’d look good in Blue” campaign; an internal WAPOL campaign to get officers to recruit a friend; a virtual Second Life campaign in late 2008; MySpace recruiting; CareerOne recruiting; the virtualcareersexpo.com website; and the Step Forward recruiting website, which it is anticipated will have up to 10 000 unique visitors every month.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This amount of \$800 000 is for 2008-09. Is the minister saying that all the strategies that he has just read out relate to that \$800 000?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: A lot of those are already underway, and part of the \$800 000 may be required to maintain them.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: How much of that \$800 000 will be for television advertising in Western Australia before the election?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I do not think that has been determined. Some of it will be for advertising, certainly, but the breakdown has not been done.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: This is a recruitment campaign, but what worries me is the total lack of good financial management, because nothing has been allocated in the forward years. Does the minister think that everything will be all right at the end of this financial year and he will not have to allocate any funds for advertising in the forward estimates to 2012?

[4.30 pm]

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The quantum allocated will be based on how many officers we are seeking to recruit. No decisions have been made beyond the next election. We will wait until then. Does the member take issue with any of the police advertising we have run over the three or four years?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No. In fact, I publicly encouraged the Minister for Police—if he remembers rightly—outside and inside Parliament to advertise for recruits to join our police service.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I thank the member for his strong endorsement of this initiative.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The minister should thank me for initiating it because the minister did not come up with it. The Office of Crime Prevention is being allocated \$400 000 for the state graffiti strategy. However, only \$200 000 is allocated for 2009-10. The government has covered that area, but why has recruitment not been covered? Something must be spent in 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I have answered that question twice already. A recruiting target is needed before money is put into a police recruitment campaign to achieve it. The recruiting target was for this term of government and we are clearly meeting that target. We will make sure that we do meet it by the time of the next election, which is due in February. Until that time, we will maintain the recruiting to get an additional 350 or more officers. The reduction in funding for the state graffiti strategy is due to the 1800 phone number. When we conduct advertising, there is a marked increase in the number of people who phone that hotline and who report graffiti. That means we can respond to it more quickly. The agencies that clean it up can respond more quickly and intelligence can be provided quickly to the police, who might be able to apprehend the offenders. Past experience has shown that advertising increases the effectiveness of the 1800 line. Therefore, funding for advertising has been provided for that purpose over the next two years.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Where does the \$400 000 go? Is it spent purely on advertising?

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Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It is all spent on advertising of various types, including television and print etc.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I presume that the allocation of \$400 000 for next year, which is also part of this year's allocation from June onwards, will be spent before the end of June.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It will be spent between July 2008 and June 2009.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Will a huge amount be spent between 1 July and the day of the election on promoting the fact that the government is advertising that it can get rid of graffiti by just phoning a hotline?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It will be driven by how big the problem is with graffiti.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It is a huge problem. It has been a problem for a couple of years. My office has been graffitied.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I appreciate the strong endorsement of the member for this campaign.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Not at all. The question I was asking is: where does the \$400 000 go? The minister has said that it is spent purely on advertising. It will not be provided to local authorities to clean up the graffiti or for staff. Is it correct that it is purely for advertising?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The budget says that it is for the Office of Crime Prevention for advertising for the state graffiti strategy. I thought that was pretty clear. It is for exactly that. It will advertise the state graffiti strategy and the 1800 number.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: It is for government advertising. Is that part of the Treasurer's \$19 million, or is it a separate amount?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I do not think so.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Does the minister think it is a separate amount?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It is part of the police budget that relates to the Office of Crime Prevention.

Mr B.S. WYATT: The first bullet point on page 376 of the *Budget Statements* under "Significant Issues and Trends" states —

Maintaining the integrity of exhibits through the enhanced storage of property (found, seized or stolen).

Can the minister confirm that that includes property seized under the Criminal Property Confiscation Act?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It will include some things that are seized under the criminal confiscation legislation, but I do not want to give the member the impression that all the items seized under the Criminal Property Confiscation Act will suddenly be located there. It is an operational matter. At certain times it will be appropriate to store items there when it is deemed to be appropriate.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I spent a lot of time dealing with that legislation before I became a member of Parliament. There were issues then regarding the storage and maintenance of property that was frozen until it was then confiscated and subsequently sold. I am interested in knowing what is planned for the storage. I appreciate that the police are frustrated at having to store the items, but I want to know that the items are being stored appropriately.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I will ask the commissioner to respond in a moment. This is an important issue. I do not have the technical or operational experience to answer that question fully. When I was shown through the current storage facility in Maylands, which is totally inadequate, I saw a motor vehicle that is involved in a murder case that was not properly stored. I do not know when that case will go to court because no-one has been arrested for it. Key evidence can be held potentially for years and the current storage arrangement is woefully inadequate. The police will obtain a lease on a large warehouse and fit it out with modern storage facilities to make sure that the evidence is not only properly stored, but also does not go missing when it is moved from one station to another and is not logged incorrectly. The control of the evidence will be improved by the use of the new facility. I ask the commissioner to make a comment because he knows a lot more about it than I.

Dr K.J. O'Callaghan: The minister has basically answered a great deal of the member's question. The genesis of the relocation to and investment in the new facility is the age of the Maylands facility, which is outdated and is not big enough. There is also the issue of asbestos and other storage challenges that are faced on the current site. Seized property has been left on the parade ground out in the open at the Maylands police academy. There is insufficient storage space inside the facility for the property and some of the buildings leak water, which can potentially contaminate court exhibits. We have sought to move much of the property off site. We are

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negotiating leasing a warehouse in the southern suburbs that is significantly larger than the current site and is under cover. We hope to move a lot of seized property and confiscated assets from Maylands to the new location by July or August this year, subject to the fit-out of the new buildings. That will make sure that we preserve the integrity and standard of the exhibits we seize.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer the minister to the fourth major achievement for 2007-08 and to the major initiatives for 2008-09 on page 387 of the *Budget Statements*. The matters are related; that is, the creation of the family violence and sex crime coordination unit from the previous family protection unit to provide a research and coordination service for domestic violence policy and sexual assault offences, and also the expansion of the Australian National Child Offender Register unit to more closely monitor high-risk reportable offenders and address mandatory reporting requirements. From memory, the ANCOR register was allocated 97 officers. Prior to the 2005 election, the Minister for Police said that 250 additional officers would be recruited, and that 97 officers were allocated on an Australia-wide agreement to operate ANCOR. I am concerned that the ANCOR register has not been properly serviced. I understand that its responsibilities have been devolved to certain districts. That puts pressure on the ability of the detectives to track the 700 people in Western Australia who appear on the register. I understand that there is a backlog of sex offences, as indicated by the commissioner earlier. He must relocate people from the regional crime unit and other units to reduce the backlog of sex offence cases. Will the minister indicate what sort of a backlog it is and how many police officers are needed to address this very important issue? Arguably, there is no more important area of crime in Western Australia than offences that are committed against our young people.

[4.40 pm]

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Western Australia Police certainly has had to take on a huge demand, particularly in remote Indigenous communities, with the number of reports of child sex abuse. That has clearly come about because of a range of matters, some of them national, but the biggest single reason was the provision of multifunction police facilities to nine locations. When police have been in these communities for some time, they build trust and rapport, and therefore people are more willing to make reports. As the member well knows, a victim of a sex crime living in a remote area is unlikely to report the matter to the police if the people responsible for the crime are living in the same community and may belong to a dominant family within the community. The good work performed by the officers at the multifunction police facilities is the single biggest reason for the increase in reports, which has created a huge demand for police to respond to. We have a whole-of-government approach; many other agencies are also involved. The commissioner is clearly hard-pressed to provide the necessary number of officers. He has put forward a proposal for regional response teams and he has indicated that he would like to set up three such teams with six officers in each. We are looking to find the officers to do that. There are a range of things underway to that purpose. That is only part of it. The member mentioned the Australian National Child Offender Register. Deputy Commissioner Dawson is probably best placed to give the member a more specific answer to his question.

Mr C.J. Dawson: In addition to what the minister has already said, I refer to the example expanded upon by the minister about the Kimberley region. There have recently been more than 200 charges processed through the superior courts. That is the equivalent of about six years' normal processing of offenders through the superior courts for the most serious child sex offences. That was unplanned and it places the onus upon the officers in the Kimberley region to monitor an additional number of offenders, some of whom have already been sentenced and incarcerated and a number of whom have already been placed back in communities. We work very closely with the Department for Child Protection and the Department of the Attorney General to ensure that there is post-sentence monitoring. However, we clearly need to apply more resources to this issue. The commissioner made the decision to reallocate four officers from rural crime to address this issue because quite frankly it had such a high priority. We are currently preparing a business proposal within the ANCOR unit to properly scope the exact number of officers we need to allocate. The member's question is accurate in the sense that it is difficult to cope with the numbers of persons on the register who are being monitored by the districts. We expect that the issue of the increase in the numbers of cases coming to the centralised sex crime division can be partly addressed through the provision of additional resourcing from the regional response teams, for which we have already allocated some funds. We can also source resources as a result of the civilianisation of custodial services at Perth Watch House, which is another of the areas that will provide an opportunity to backfill and supplement officers in the sex crime division.

Mr M.J. COWPER: A further question, Madam Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: If it is a very quick one, because, to be fair, the member's party spokesperson has not had much of a run.

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Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I think there is about \$2.5 million in additional funding. That is not for officers, but for extra resourcing, when we get the officers, for travel and accommodation around the state. There is extra money in the budget in recognition of the increased demand.

Mr M.J. COWPER: How big is the backlog? The mandatory reporting legislation that recently passed through Parliament will have a significant impact on our policing capacity, on top of what we have already spoken about.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: There is additional money in this budget for that.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Is there any additional manpower?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: There is additional money in the budget.

Mr M.J. COWPER: No additional manpower?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: As I have already indicated, we are currently ahead of the bill for the 350 extra police officers who have joined since 2005.

Mr M.J. COWPER: They have already been allocated to the trial unit, the Secret Harbour Police Station and the ANCOR register.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: That is the difficulty the commissioner faces in meeting this huge demand. It is a lot better than the last four years of the Liberal government. Not one additional police officer was employed. There was not a dollar for one additional police officer over four years. We have delivered 350 additional officers, which is a huge increase. Clearly, the demand is growing, but there are additional resources.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to service 2, “Crime Prevention and Public Order”, and the third dot point under “Major Achievements For 2007-08” on page 383. It refers in part to the government’s initiatives in attracting and retaining personnel and targeting international police officers. This morning on talkback radio I heard a pretty disturbing interview with a young police officer from Busselton who said that he had sustained three very violent assaults in the space of a week. He sounded as though he had good peer support. We are making efforts to attract international officers, and we know that those who come are leaving their extended families and networks to become immersed in a completely new culture. Beyond initial recruiting and training, do we provide any additional ongoing support to try to ensure we retain the numbers as time goes by, especially as international officers could potentially be exposed to violent assault? Such occurrences are upsetting for anyone, let alone people who are a long way away from their families.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The assault the member refers to was simply not acceptable and is a matter that the commissioner is pursuing further. I will not go there, but that officer has impressed people with the way he has handled this matter, and we clearly want to keep him in WA Police. From what I have seen of the way he has performed publicly, he is an excellent officer. It is very unfortunate that he has been caught up in those three assaults. I will ask the commissioner to comment on the wider issue of the provision of support for police from overseas.

Dr K.J. O’Callaghan: There will always be an attrition rate for overseas recruiting because people come to Australia and then decide for one reason or another that they do not like it here, or they miss their extended families and have all sorts of pressures. We have lost about 10 per cent of the recruits we have brought in from overseas. Of 400 officers, that is only about 40. We do not pay for these officers to come; they have to make their own way here, so there is no cost involved, apart from a training loss if they join the police and leave after training. There are a number of support networks. Officers have set up their own support network, which works quite effectively. We provide a lot of support at the academy and at the recruiting stage, particularly with resettlement advice and issues such as schooling, housing, access to Medicare and all the sorts of things one would expect people to need when they come to a new country. One of the challenges for us is that when they get to regional Western Australia—the officer speaking on the radio this morning is based in Busselton—they rely very much on their peer network and our health and welfare resources for that sort of support. For argument’s sake, if an officer is injured or encounters particular family stress or related issues, we have quite a good health and welfare network with counsellors and psychologists who can help. However, as in many areas of policing, officers rely a lot on their peer support network. I notice that the officer who spoke on the radio this morning said that his experiences in Busselton are not dissimilar to his experiences working with the London Metropolitan Police Service, so it is not that different. Recently there was the case of Matt Butcher, although he is not an officer from overseas. A lot of work goes into supporting officers and their families when they experience that sort of trauma. We could always do better, but for most cases in which people are injured or face particularly stressful situations, we have very good peer support and health and welfare networks in place to help them out.

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Mr P. PAPALIA: The commissioner mentioned Matt Butcher and other cases. There is a perception of increased incidents of violence against police officers. Everyone is concerned about it. Have we created any other new initiatives or are we responding with any new mechanisms to support these officers, particularly ones who have been subjected to quite violent acts?

[4.50 pm]

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I thank the member for the dorothy dixer. However, tougher legislation has been passed in Parliament, which, obviously, was after the incident the member is talking about —

Mr P. PAPALIA: I meant more along the lines of the support mechanisms available directly to the individuals who are involved across this.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: The Commissioner of Police might like to elaborate, but I know that the local support network is very, very strong because the officers really are part of the family. The member has a brother in Western Australia Police so perhaps he has some understanding of that. A range of support is offered, which the commissioner covered more or less with a general statement. He may wish to be more specific.

Dr K.J. O'Callaghan: We have increased the numbers of people who work in our health and welfare unit. Therefore, we have, for argument's sake, appointed an additional police chaplain for that sort of support. There are extra workers and case workers inside our health and welfare unit. We outsource some of the work when it gets too much, so we ensure that people are not left waiting for assistance if they need it.

Of course, one way in which we protect police officers from that sort of violence, as the member will know, is to issue Tasers, which we have done in the past 12 months. We do not expect police officers to get involved in hand-to-hand combat anymore because it just results in injuries and that is one of the main reasons we rolled out Tasers to every operational police officer. Therefore, today any police officer who is working can get a Taser when he goes to work on the street. That levels the playing field a bit because there was a trend of some officers who were perhaps slighter or smaller being injured more than other officers. Providing officers with that extra sort of confidence and weaponry helps them to deal with those difficult conflict situations. In addition, the Western Australia Police Academy curriculum spends a lot more time on conflict resolution and dealing with live situations, which is one reason that we invested so heavily in our scenario village at the police academy.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The police commissioner mentioned Tasers. How far along are the police in replacing the capsicum sprays that were withdrawn? I am told that there are sprays that do not have —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I understand that the replacements have arrived. I ask Mr Italiano to provide details on that.

Mr G. Italiano: We have distributed the first shipment of 2 500 canisters that arrived last week and another order is arriving in the next week or two. We have had some indication that we need to distribute a few more canisters that we have been unable to allocate from that initial shipment and that will be resolved very quickly.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Therefore, our officers will very soon be able to continue using the capsicum sprays against violent offenders.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I think the answer Mr Italiano gave indicates that most already are but there may be a few gaps and the police are moving to cover those as quickly as possible.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I have a follow-up question to an answer that I think the deputy commissioner gave to the member for Murray. Correct me if I am wrong, but I think it was in relation to the watch-house and the number of officers stationed there. As I understand it, there was a suggestion at some stage for those officers to be replaced by, perhaps, Global Solutions or another private security organisation so that those officers could be released for front-line duties. Is that still the case; and, if so, how many officers will that involve?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am quite happy to provide some detail in response to the question asked by the member for Hillarys. He quite rightly alluded to the fact that there was discussion of changes to the watch-house. Those changes are proceeding but not along the lines initially thought. As indicated earlier, in terms of the regional response group for sex crimes, particularly in the Kimberley, 18 officers are required. One way to try to obtain those officers was to move them from the watch-house. In addition, there are other commitments, which have been discussed. Again, the commissioner would like to be able to relocate some officers to deal with those. Currently, I think there are about 52 full-time equivalent officers at the watch-house. The initial proposal sought to contract out the total management of the watch-house so most of those 52 officers could be relocated to other duties to meet some of the demands we have already discussed. A range of difficulties and delays have been experienced in that process, in part due to the employment market —

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Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Is that in relation to getting private security?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am trying to explain. The original proposal was for a company, such as the company that currently has a contract for court security, to manage the watch-house. However, that company is currently recruiting because new courts will open in the near future and it needs to provide a lot of security officers to cover that. I have hinted at some of the reasons for the delays and the commissioner has come up with an alternative proposal. The police will recruit officers specifically for the watch-house who will not be sworn police officers; they will be special constables. That program is currently being worked up and I believe it shows great promise. I cannot provide the member with an undertaking about exactly how it will happen because it is a work in progress. However, the target, if we can achieve it, is to replace a reasonable number of those 52 officers with public servants who will be trained—but obviously with a much lower level of training than police officers—and who will be special constables, as needed. They will take on the major duties required in managing the watch-house. The sworn officers who will be displaced will be able to move to the other areas of high need. Money is in the budget for that program. The money was actually allocated to the Department of Corrective Services because the original proposal was to contract out the watch-house management and the department currently manages that contract for private security guards. That money will now be transferred back to Western Australia Police and we hope to proceed with the proposal I have outlined. The proposal is not locked away but it shows great promise and hopefully we can make it work.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: My main question relates to the fifth dot point under “Major Achievements For 2007-08” on page 390 of the *Budget Statements*, which relates to infringement management operations. What is the delay today from the time people commit a road traffic offence to when they actually receive the infringement notice? We know the delay has been anything between three and six months. I want to know whether that has improved. What is the average delay today in people receiving their infringement notices?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: This certainly is an issue of concern. The police instituted a new system that put photographs on infringement notices. That was certainly a big step forward; however, the implementation of that caused a major backlog in processing infringement notices. That has been worked on and we now find that delay is four to five weeks, whereas it was several months previously. I am sure there will be continuing efforts to try to reduce that even further.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: There was talk of privatising, so to speak, the infringement notice processing operations to relieve the officers involved in that. Is it still in the minister’s mind to do that; and, if so, how many officers would it relieve?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: I am happy to answer that question but I need to explain how the operation works because the member needs to see it in the context of the whole process. Therefore, there is not a direct answer to the question as the member has asked it. I think the member’s question is derived from the police requirement to replace the existing cameras. The cameras are wet film Multanovas that are becoming obsolete and are therefore difficult to maintain. Soon we will no longer be able to maintain the cameras and will need to replace them. As the member alluded to in his earlier question, we have had some processing difficulties in the past so the police put forward a proposal for the purchase of new cameras. The proposal was really for a simple replacement of the cameras with more up-to-date technology, keeping the same style of operation, but it was suggested that the processing would be more efficient if it was contracted out. That was one part of the proposal that has now been subsumed by a larger working group across government, chaired by the Office of Road Safety, because we want to go a lot further than simply replacing the existing cameras with more efficient processing. We want to lock in improved road safety outcomes, which mean we need a design encompassing the types of cameras, the deployment of those cameras and the policies that would apply. We will lock that in with how the infringement notices are processed within the total system. That work is currently underway and the earlier work, which was the contract to simply replace the cameras, becomes a smaller subset of that work. Members have seen news items on the Road Safety Council’s projects. I understand that the council has made public only bits of the project; therefore, people have either misunderstood or misrepresented those bits of the overall work. I am frustrated that it is taking so long. Nonetheless, I am confident that we will get a total system that will deliver better road safety outcomes rather than just efficient processing, which is what the original brief was looking at.

[5.00 pm]

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The minister did answer my initial question, but I was interrupted by another member and I did not hear the answer to the first part of the question, which was: can the minister tell me the delay in a person committing an offence —

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: My answer was that it is now down to four or five weeks. It is a big improvement, but we would like it to be better.

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Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Is it down literally to four or five weeks?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Yes.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Can the minister tell me how many that represents? For the minister's benefit, there was a story circulating. I do not know whether it is true. The story is that a lot of them were being thrown away to try to reduce the number that have been delayed.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It was a mischievous story that is not based on fact. I am sure that the member would not be involved in those sorts of rumours. The police have already answered that rumour in its response to the article in last Saturday's paper, and it is not true.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am pleased about that.

The appropriation was recommended.