

POLICE — VOLUNTARY SEVERANCES

860. Mrs M.H. ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the termination of the employment of 196 police officers at a cost of \$37 million.

- (1) Given that Commissioner of Police Karl O'Callaghan stated last year —
... there is not a lot of wastage or fat to make significant savings ...
where is the \$37 million coming from to fund the termination of the employment of the 196 officers?
- (2) How can the minister guarantee that service delivery will not diminish in any way by the redundancy of 196 officers?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Midland for the opportunity to talk about the voluntary severance offer that we have made available to Western Australian police —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: This is an opportunity to highlight a significant point of difference between this side of the house and the other side of the house in the opportunities extended to police officers. These are not cuts; these are not redundancies; these are 196 voluntary —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You said they were redundancies yesterday.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: No, I did not; I said they were voluntary severances. One hundred and ninety-six police officers have had the offer of a voluntary severance package extended to them. The positions remain. The 196 positions will be reviewed with a view to —

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr Speaker, I just draw your attention to the relevance of this answer. I have asked where the \$37 million is coming from. That is the answer I would like to receive.

The SPEAKER: Minister, that was the question, so can you concentrate on that, please.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Mr Speaker, there were —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The member for Midland should perhaps pay attention to what comes out of her mouth when she asks a question because she also asked me whether front-line services would be affected.

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Mr Speaker, the minister is canvassing your ruling by pointing at the member for Midland and telling the member for Midland what she was doing, but you had actually directed her to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Minister, I understood the question to relate to the \$37 million for the payout of 196 officers, so can you please address that.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will, Mr Speaker. The \$37 million, as I stated yesterday on numerous occasions, has been found from within police resources. Despite those comments that the commissioner made last year, what WA Police has actually been doing, as part of our reform program, is reviewing its expenditure and the way that it spends those very precious dollars that we extend it to ensure community safety and to deliver the front-line service that we so highly value in this state to the community of Western Australia. Therefore, WA Police has diligently been looking at its expenditure and it has done a fantastic job. Members on this side of the house will be really thrilled to hear that WA Police has found \$37 million to fund these voluntary severances —

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Extract from *Hansard*

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Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mrs Liza Harvey; Speaker; Mr Bill Johnston

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, you are entitled to a supplementary question. The minister is explaining that there have been cuts to the department or savings, so if you want to ask another question afterwards, you can.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I am pleased to say that there have been no cuts to the department. We have not cut the budget; no positions have been removed. This is a voluntary severance package for police officers who have put up their hands and said that they want to take advantage of this very generous offer that the state government said it would extend to public servants. It is a very significant point of difference. Members opposite have been out in the media saying that they would exclude WA Police from this opportunity, that they would not extend this offer to Western Australian police officers and that they should not have the advantage of a voluntary severance package—a very generous voluntary severance package. On this side of the house, we believe that Western Australian police deserve it. We are really pleased that those officers have taken up the opportunity. That gives us the opportunity to review those 196 positions. We will look at the work those officers are doing. Some of it is administrative work, and out of our reform program we expect that we will be reducing the administrative burden on police, which will allow us to convert a large number of those 196 positions to front-line positions—constables out in cars, on the beat, out in the community responding to calls from the community for assistance and help. That is our priority. The commissioner is on board with that priority and that is how Western Australia Police has found the resources to fund its top priority for front-line policing from within its budget.