

WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE HELICOPTER

**365. Mr J.M. FRANCIS to the Minister for Police:**

I refer the minister to the state of the Western Australia Police helicopter, which is based in my electorate of Jandakot and which is currently in pieces after years of neglect from the previous Labor government. I ask the minister to outline for the house what he is doing to ensure that the Western Australia Police will have a continued presence over our skies.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON replied:**

I thank the member for Jandakot for this question and acknowledge his very strong commitment in the areas of law and order and fighting crime. His commitment is matched by the rest of this government and all members on this side of the house.

Yes, it is true that the existing helicopter, PolAir-1, based in the member for Jandakot's electorate, is undergoing some very serious maintenance. I will not say how long that maintenance will take because I do not want the crooks out there to know how long it will take; however, it will take longer than I would like. This government's commitment is such that we will provide some up-front funding for a brand-new helicopter—\$24 million. It is not a small sum. That helicopter will be a state-of-the-art helicopter with the necessary high-tech information technology equipment on board. The beauty of this new, much larger helicopter is that it will be able to travel much faster and much further than the existing helicopter. It will also have its existing capabilities to be used for some very serious search and rescue operations to bring injured people back to the major Perth hospitals. It is long overdue and I know that when I was in opposition I advocated many, many times for a second helicopter. The member is quite right when he says that the previous government did not allocate funding to do that. I hasten to say that the previous government obviously did not have the same commitment to law and order that this government has. The beauty of this new helicopter is that it will be able to be used not only for search and rescue operations, but also to detect those people who at the moment commit many crimes in society. It will be able to pick out those criminals not only during the daytime, but also during the night-time. It will be able to watch exactly where they go and it will be able to direct the arresting ground forces. It will be used also —

**Mr P.B. Watson:** Can you get them to dim that light a bit?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** We know that the member for Albany is not serious about law and order issues. We know that he is weak on crime and weak on drugs. We have a really good government that will be tough on criminals, crime and drugs.

**Mr P. Papalia:** Excellent!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** It is excellent, my friend. That is what people out there wanted and why they for voted us to be in government and for Labor members to sit on the opposition benches. Long may that be the case!

**Mr J.C. Kobelke:** Last year's budget had money for two helicopters; are you going to get two or one?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** The Labor Party did not have money in the budget for two helicopters—not at all.

**Mr J.C. Kobelke:** There was money in this year's budget for two new helicopters.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No, there was not; my friend is talking rubbish! There was no funding for a helicopter.

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** My friend is talking rubbish! There was no forward funding for a helicopter.

**Mr J.C. Kobelke:** Go and read the budget papers.

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

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** We have, my friend. We have a lot of verballing from the previous government—a lot of talk and no action. However, this government is here for action and has committed up-front \$24 million for a new helicopter.

Apart from its search and rescue capabilities and catching criminals fleeing a bank robbery or violent crime, it will also be able to track road users who breach the road rules. We will be able to catch more hoons and more people who are speeding—not only in the metropolitan area, but other areas, too—and we will bring them to justice. I am delighted that the government has approved this funding because it is an essential component of fighting crime in this state that has been long overdue.