

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE AND MINISTER FOR POLICE — COMMUNITY FORUMS

501. Mr A.P. JACOB to the Minister for Police:

I refer to the minister's undertaking to recommence community forums around our state with the police commissioner. I am very happy that the next forum will be near my electorate.

Mr A.P. O'Gorman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Joondalup, I call you to order for the first time today.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am particularly pleased that the next forum will be near my electorate of Ocean Reef. Can the minister please advise the house what measures have been put in place to ensure local community members can air their concerns on law and order?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Ocean Reef for his question and his interest in law and order, policing and road safety issues. There will be a community forum in Clarkson on 4 October. I am very pleased to announce that community forums will be recommencing. This came out of a conversation I had with the Commissioner of Police after he had been on the record publicly talking about the difficulty in hearing from members of the community at community forums when members of Parliament take advantage of those opportunities to grandstand, take up air time and drown out members of the community, who do not always have access to the Commissioner of Police or the Minister for Police. The commissioner and I have agreed on a model in which the commissioner will not be placed in a position —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The Commissioner of Police and I have agreed on a model whereby the commissioner will answer questions from the community on operational issues. If members of Parliament choose to try to take over these community forums, or misinterpret the advice being offered to community members at these community forums, I will step in and speak to those members of Parliament. To use an example —

Opposition members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: This is a serious issue, members. To use an example of the type of behaviour I am talking about, a community forum was held in Mirrabooka in March this year. At that community forum, the member for Maylands called for a guarantee from a senior police officer present that Bayswater Police Station would not be closed down. The response that the senior police officer gave was —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: The members for Mindarie and Girrawheen, I formally call you to order for the first time today. Only one person asked the question. I do not expect a torrent of interjections.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will quote a response that a senior police officer gave, as reported —

“There are no plans to close Bayswater police station within the next couple of years,” he said.

“It would be a lie to say we have not looked at (closing) Bayswater, as you know we have. It is a discussion we will have within WA Police, probably in 2014.

This police officer had been put on the spot in a community forum by the member for Maylands. Unbeknown to him, the member for Maylands produced a leaflet in response to this; a leaflet that went out with the Leader of the Opposition's name on it. It states —

A dark cloud hangs over the future of Bayswater Police Station—despite hollow assurances by the Barnett Government.

That is fearmongering in the member for Maylands' community. The problem with this leaflet is that the information on it is incorrect. The commissioner, not I —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Police, when you refer to a member in here you should expect some feedback. That is what is happening. It does not help us to progress this particular question or the answer to it. Although you have been referred to, member for Maylands, might I also suggest that there are other people in this place who wish to stand later today to ask questions. I do not want this question or this answer delayed any further. I hope both you, Minister for Police, and you, member for Maylands, understand that.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will close by saying this is the risk in police officers giving information at community forums. I would like to get on the record, and make it absolutely clear to members in this house, that neither WA

Police nor I have any plans to close Bayswater Police Station now or at any time in the future. Perhaps the member concerned might like to put a flyer out in her electorate correcting the record, or perhaps she might like to put a flyer out saying that she is responsible for blowing away the dark clouds that are hanging over Bayswater Police Station! For the record, it will not be closed.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Police and member for Maylands, you may recall I stood about a minute ago in this place and indicated something to you which you should have understood. Minister for Police, I formally call you to order for the first time. Member for Maylands, I formally call you to order for the first time. When I sit down, I am going to seek another question.