

POLICE — PURSUIT LEGISLATION

590. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Police:

Can the minister please update the house on the impact of the police pursuits legislation passed by this house last year?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for this question and for his continued interest in law and order issues, particularly issues of road safety and lawlessness on our roads. A lot of members will recall that late last year —

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the second time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: A lot of members will recall that late last year we brought legislation to this place that introduced mandatory penalties for people charged with driving recklessly while being pursued by police or trying to evade capture by police. Part of that legislation also introduced a defence for police officers to ensure that when they were engaging in emergency driving procedures and trying to get these particularly dangerous offenders off our roads, they would have some protection afforded to them by this Liberal–National government so that they can do the job we are asking them to do; that is, to get these offenders off the roads and to get them behind bars, where they belong. That legislation has been a huge success. It was proclaimed on 12 December last year. One hundred and thirteen offenders are now off our roads and behind bars—exactly where they belong—as a result of this legislation. Although it is difficult to draw a link between the number of custodial sentences over a period because the legislation has not yet been in place for a 12-month period, I am really pleased to say that I think that this has been successful and that police now have the confidence to do the jobs that we particularly want them to do.

The member for Forrestfield might be interested in the issues we had getting this legislation passed through this house. In fact, the former member for Forrestfield said in this house —

I will be quite happy and open and honest to say that I am part of that Labor opposition that tends to rally against things such as mandatory sentencing and the idea that we should take discretion out of the courts.

I am really pleased that we now have a member for Forrestfield who stands here firmly on the side of his constituents and on the side generally of the community, and who is in step with the community to ensure that people who drive recklessly while evading police will go to jail for a mandatory minimum term of six months. This side of the house has always been really tough. We have always introduced legislation that imposes a requirement on the courts to give tougher sentences. We often rally against members opposite who suggest that Parliament does not need to intervene by introducing mandatory sentencing because the courts are indeed tough enough on those offenders. But I do take exception to that particular line of thinking, member for Forrestfield, because as recently as August this year a magistrate in Kalgoorlie actually said her preference would have been not to have jailed an offender who went to jail for a minimum mandatory term of six months for evading police in Kalgoorlie in very dangerous circumstances with behaviour that put road users' and police officers' lives at risk. The magistrate said in the media that her preference would have been not to have imposed a mandatory minimum jail term on that offender.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to get on the record that this Liberal–National government continues to stand behind our police officers. We will continue to support the good work they do, and we will also continue to bring legislation to this place that carries penalties that will ensure that offenders who deserve to be behind bars and off our roads and not endangering the community go to jail consistent with community expectations.