

POLICE — DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

897. Mrs G.J. GODFREY to the Minister for Police:

During 2014–15, there were 16 461 domestic assault offences reported in Western Australia. Can the minister advise what measures WA Police are implementing to address this issue?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Belmont for raising this very important issue in her question in respect to domestic violence. Western Australia Police and the government view domestic violence as a very serious issue and a high priority within the agency's work. This is reflected in the fact that WA Police has amongst its top six key effectiveness indicators KPI 6 for measuring our success and effectiveness in the family and domestic violence space. We measure the percentage of family and domestic violence incidents in which the offender has been processed for offences against a person within seven days. Our target for 2014–15 was 75 per cent. We did not achieve that. We actually achieved 71.6 per cent. Although we have not achieved our target, it is a significant improvement on the 2012–13 financial year.

The member for Belmont is quite right that there was an increase in the incidence of family and domestic violence against the person of 16.8 per cent in 2014–15. For members' interest, that is 2 839 additional incidents. We had 19 728 offences in 2014–15, which was up from 16 889 in 2012–13. We have much room for improvement. The Commissioner of Police, the executive team and I are very committed to ensuring that we improve our response and effectiveness in respect to family and domestic violence.

In that vein, I welcome the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee's report, "A measure of trust: How WA Police evaluates the effectiveness of its response to family and domestic violence". I have had a look through the report. I appreciate the work of the committee in compiling that report and conducting that inquiry. We will be interrogating that report and I will ensure that we have a response available to the Parliament in due course.

We have initiated a number of new initiatives around the family and domestic violence space. One of them is around the perpetrator engagement program, whereby we work with offenders who are in custody on their violence and anger management issues to try to proactively refer them to programs to correct their offending behaviour. We have incorporated into Constable Care programs awareness around family and domestic violence issues that is consistent with our protective behaviours approach to inform our young people about when they might find themselves in a family and domestic violence scenario. We also have our family and domestic violence response teams. They are a collaborative arrangement between multiple agencies to ensure that we can jointly assess families and victims of domestic violence; we can triage offences and our response to it; and we can coordinate an across-agency support program around those victims and improve the safety of women and children, who are predominantly the victims of domestic violence.

We have also initiated our red files program. Red files are where we flag people who present an extreme risk. Police collaborate with other agencies and ensure that we know the risks and that we have a multi-agency approach to managing those people whom we have identified through our red files as being at extreme risk of offending. In addition to that, we have introduced our mobile phone duress system. It is a 1800 number. We issue mobile phones to victims who may not have access to a mobile phone or the access they have might be restricted. That is to ensure that they can call that 1800 number if they are in distress and that will spark a priority response from police. That is also coordinated with a safety plan and strategy around those victims to ensure that if they find themselves in a crisis scenario, we can get there quickly and they can get out of that scenario effectively and we can keep that person intact.

We will continue to work on family and domestic violence. We want to drive the rates down. Police have been engaged in a very proactive approach over the last several years to try to drive down the incidence of family and domestic violence, improve our response and, indeed, improve the way that we report on our effectiveness in the family and domestic violence sphere in Western Australia.