

POLICE AND COMMUNITY YOUTH CENTRES

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr G.A. Woodhams) outlined that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [2.54 pm]: I move —

That the house calls on the Premier to —

- (1) immediately halt plans to withdraw police officers and administration staff from police and community youth centres; and
- (2) explain why he has broken his 2008 promise to reinstate school-based police officers.

Nothing gives me more pleasure, in moving my first matter of public interest as Leader of the Opposition, to raise the very important issue of police and community youth centres in Western Australia. PCYCs are great Western Australian institutions. They are spread throughout our community. They do great work with young people in our community and with the broader community in ensuring that people feel valued and part of our society and people have constructive activities to engage in and a healthy respect for police officers in our society and a healthy respect for the law. I have great respect for the institution. Police and citizens youth centres have been around since 1941. As I understand it, they were established at a time when many fathers were off serving the country against threats from overseas. The whole idea was to create an institution that provided guidance and support through a father figure, which so many boys and girls were missing—particularly boys—because their fathers were away serving the country. This great institution has been around for more than 70 years in our state. They are spread throughout our communities, the length and breadth of Western Australia. That is why I find it appalling that the government would deliberately go out and gut a fine Western Australian institution with malice aforethought, which is exactly what they are doing.

These institutions are independent organisations. They do their own fundraising and undertake their own activities. They basically stand on their own two feet. All they ask for out of government is a little staffing support. The government provides around Western Australia about 29 staff, of whom 17 or so are police officers. Seventeen police officers in a police force of around 5 000 are dedicated to our PCYCs around Western Australia. They produce great outcomes with young people who need to develop a healthy respect for police and the law. They undertake programs such as the Weld to Life program in my electorate of Rockingham where Senior Constable Tim Ellis engages young people who are disaffected, who have dropped out of school and who perhaps are in trouble with the law, to learn the welding trade—an important trade in Western Australia. They have established all sorts of facilities—mobile welding workshop and the like. I have met young people on numerous occasions who do not fit into the school environment, who sometimes have difficulty reading, who have been in trouble with the law, who have engaged in graffiti and who have been caught and brought before the Children's Court. Those young people get into that environment and work with a police officer who gives them guidance in life. They then develop a skill that allows them to go on and get a proper, good and worthwhile job for life. Welding is a tough occupation, but a very worthwhile and much-needed occupation in Western Australia.

The police officer in the Rockingham PCYC who undertakes that role does a great job for those young people. That service is replicated at PCYCs around Western Australia, the length and breadth of this state. If we go to regional areas in Western Australia such as Broome, Carnarvon, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Northam, Bunbury and Collie we will find the same sorts of services being offered in communities in which young people often do not have as many activities to engage in or do not have access to all the opportunities young people in the city do. Members will find that young people in those communities are engaged in similar activities—constructive, work-related activities—keeping them out of trouble and making sure they have some guidance from a fine, upstanding member of the community, a police officer. These young people often have grown up in environments in which there is no father figure. They have not had that male father figure that is provided in PCYCs. They do not have all the opportunities of middle-class kids around the metropolitan area. They go to their PCYC to get that life guidance, support and help. What does it do? It reduces crime in the long term, and the short term as well. What does the government do? It says it is pulling those resources out! It is not prepared to stand and defend our PCYCs.

Mr R.F. Johnson: When did we say that?

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Mr M. McGOWAN: We have the document here. It refers to the resources and to police officers and administration staff in these PCYCs being transitioned out, which is doublespeak for saying “We’re pulling the service out; we’re pulling the resources out”. I heard the Minister for Police using exactly the same language in a grievance today. He used phrases such as “We’re transitioning the officers”. My favourite was “It will resolve in mutually beneficial outcomes”. Then he said “We’re developing partnerships”. All of this modern gobbledegook doublespeak comes out of the police minister when he should have just said, “We’re pulling the police officers out of PCYCs —

Mr R.F. Johnson: That’s not true. We’re not.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, it is. The minister should have said, “We’re pulling those administration staff out of PCYCs in Western Australia.” That is exactly what the government is up to. The minister can use all the doublespeak he likes. The government is going to call these police officers youth information officers, youth liaison officers or something of that nature from this point forward under the reign of the Barnett government. Under this new arrangement, these officers will be back in the police stations working with the PCYCs. Any local member worth his salt who has been around for a little while and who has a PCYC in his electorate will know that the police officer on duty in the PCYC is doing good work. Do members really think those police officers will be back there? Do members think those 17 out of 5 000 officers around Western Australia will not be sucked into other duties? That is exactly what will happen. They will be sucked back into other duties. They will not be carrying out that important crime prevention work of working with disaffected young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

If we go to any of those communities and talk to any public figure, the local member of Parliament, the local mayor or the like, they will say that having the police officer in the PCYC is crucial to that organisation’s success. The minister has deliberately decided that that is the course of action he will take. He will stand up and say that it is the police commissioner’s decision and not his responsibility. The Premier has left the chamber, even though this MPI is directed at him to take some action in this regard. He would not even answer a question on this subject in question time. He would not directly address these issues. He will say that it is the police commissioner’s decision and there is nothing he can do about that. A good Premier and a good police minister would stand up for their local PCYCs. We on this side of the house are going to make sure that every one of those communities around Western Australia knows exactly what is going on with their PCYCs and what the government is doing to their PCYCs in suburban and regional communities around Western Australia. The government is ripping out the resources and gutting the organisations, which will cause an upswing in youth crime in those communities and take away that father figure from many young people who do not have one currently. It is a disgrace that it has taken that action.

This comes on top of the government breaking its election commitment to have school-based police officers. This needs to be raised. The Liberal Party document “Better Behaviour in Public Schools” was launched before the last state election. It states —

- A Liberal Government will commit ... to —
- Reinstate school-based police officers ...

Mr M.J. Cowper: Because you took them away.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The government has not done it. It came up with a promise and it has not kept it. What is the government’s excuse? We heard its excuse when the Minister for Police said on 7 September 2011 —

What we mean by school-based police officers in that sense is a linking between a certain number of schools and local police and PCYCs.

Basically, the government’s idea was that locating police officers in the PCYCs would make up for breaking its election promise. However, now that the government is pulling the police out of the PCYCs, not only has its entire election promise gone, but its excuse is now shown to be hollow. What is more, the Minister for Police even said on 22 September 2010 in this house—misleading the house once again, “This government supports the expansion of PCYCs.” The minister is expanding PCYCs by taking the resource out! He is closing some of them, through this loss of resources. As a result, we will lose this marvellous Western Australian institution that is much loved by communities and by people who have represented their communities for a long time. We will lose that resource, all because of the minister’s action—or his failure to stand up for what he has committed to do.

I look at the member for Albany. I have been to Albany recently and I have spoken to him about the wonderful PCYC in Albany. The member for Albany sought assurances from the Commissioner of Police on this issue. But what does this document say? It says that police staff in the Albany PCYC will go; they will be transitioned in

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June 2013—just after the next election! That is what is going to happen in Albany, just so everyone understands exactly what the government is up to.

The Premier needs to stand up in this place and explain what he is going to do. We want none of this doublespeak or these arrangements by which the government says it will put a police officer back into the station and they will go and visit the PCYCs on occasion, and so forth. We all know that in reality that will not happen. If the Premier does not stand up in this place to explain this, he will be responsible for another failure; that is, the gutting of PCYCs, which are marvellous institutions around this state.

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [3.07 pm]: This is interesting! Again, members opposite are afraid of a debate. The Minister for Police is afraid to speak before me. We have seen this over and over again in debates on matters of public interest. That is because the minister knows that a lot of what he has already said in the media today is nothing but rubbish. The Minister for Police goaded the Leader of the Opposition a moment ago and during question time and asked, “Where is your document? These aren’t government documents!” Guess what, minister? Police documents are government documents; the police department is part of the government. I will not table them all for the minister, but I have seen the emails and the documents, and they are from the police service. I have also seen a range of documents that have been generated at the Federation of Western Australian Police and Community Youth Centres as well. There are police department documents and federation documents to back up what the opposition is saying today. For the record, the PCYCs are: Albany, Armadale, Broome, Bunbury, Carnarvon, Claremont, Collie, Fremantle, Geraldton, Gosnells, Kalgoorlie, Kensington, Midland, Northam, Rockingham, Scarborough and Subiaco. We know that over the next 12 to 18 months none of those centres will have a single police officer based there. The government uses as its excuse that some of those police officers are spending up to half of their time on administrative duties. The fact is that many of those police officers are spending the vast majority of their time in direct contact with young people. In addition to that, there are the police public servants, the unsworn staff who have traditionally been paid for by the state government of the day, through the police budget, and located at PCYCs to help manage those PCYCs. As a result of what this government is doing some of the managers of some of the PCYCs who are full-time public servants will no longer be employed, and those PCYCs will be left without a manager.

One piece of correspondence that I particularly want to refer to is a letter that was sent to the member for Collie–Preston. Many of our members have received letters from people involved with their local police and citizens youth clubs, but this one is very telling because it is from Margaret Briggs. Margaret Briggs lives in Collie and has been a member of the board of her PCYC for over 30 years. She writes —

Dear Mick

I have been a member of the Management Committee of Collie PCYC for over 30 years and I am also a Life Member. The Collie PCYC has been an integral part of the Collie Community for about fifty years. The WA Federation of Police and Community Youth Clubs is in the process of changing many things within the PCYC. The intention is to replace PCYC’s with Live Life Centres. This has already happened at a few clubs in the metro area and will happen here in 2013.

I am concerned that what the Federation of PCYC want to change will have a huge impact on the future of the Collie PCYC. One thing that concerns me most is that they are going to remove Police presence within our club and redeploying our current Assistant Manager Elaine March to another department. Elaine has been employed at our club for twenty years and is a valued volunteer and Life Member.

The police department is therefore employing her. Based on this letter, this is an unsworn person provided by the police service who, in addition, obviously volunteers. The letter goes on —

I am organising a meeting on the 12 March 2012 at the Club starting at 7.00pm to discuss the future of the club and what Federation want from us as a community and what will happen to our club when these changes occur.

I extend an invitation to you to attend this meeting as it is important to our club to have our MLA in attendance. Your input would be invaluable.

I have also invited Mr Freddy Tan ... of the WA Federation of Police and Community Youth Clubs, Collie Shire Councillor Ian Miffling, Club Life Members ... and ... Collie PCYC Management Committee ...

She mentions others and that she is looking forward to seeing the member for Collie–Preston at the meeting.

That is typical of the letters and emails that are coming in from these clubs right throughout Western Australia. People in all of those communities are very, very upset that they are losing the police officers from the clubs. This is from a government that has done practically nothing in crime prevention and community policing. This

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government knew that it would be popular with the public when it went to the 2008 election and talked about engaging police with young people, about crime prevention and about dealing with the heart of those issues. This government promised that it would reinstate school-based police officers. What it got wrong in its policy was that those officers had come out of schools during the term of the last Court government. In fact, I lost the school-based police officer at Swan View Senior High School in my electorate when the current Premier was Minister for Education. This government made a very clear promise three and a half years ago that it would reinstate school-based police officers because it knew that the community would respond favourably to that promise. But it has not delivered; it has not done that. The best the government did was send a PCYC police officer from Claremont to Gilmore College in Kwinana for a six-month trial, and said it would look at what it would do from then on. I can only assume that as a result of that trial, the government has decided to completely take police officers out of PCYCs. It is not good enough.

This is a very serious matter for the community. Not only has the government not reinstated school-based police officers, as it promised and as it gave a commitment to at the last election, but also it is now ripping out police officers from PCYCs. Not only is the government ripping out police officers from PCYCs, but also it is ripping out the administrative support staff. The total wage bill for the sworn and unsworn officers that are being ripped out of PCYCs is in the order of \$2 million—\$2 million of funding is being ripped out. In addition, as a further insult to PCYCs, this minister through his department, the police department, is kicking out PCYC administrative staff from their premises in Cannington. As we speak, they are being pushed out the door and being told to find another place from which to run their administration. The PCYC administration is scrambling around trying to find somewhere else to go. It has looked at a caretaker's house next door to the PCYC in Kensington. It does not have permission from the council. The house probably requires \$250 000 worth of work before an administration could be run from it. Currently, the council provides it to the PCYC at a peppercorn rent of about a dollar a year because it is seen as a community asset and because programs for the local community are being run from the centre and the caretaker's house. In a cost-shifting exercise the Western Australia Police has decided that it will no longer pay for the headquarters of the PCYC administration. It has decided to see if headquarters can be provided by local government for nothing. That is plain wrong. This is either a concerted plan of the government or else it could not care less. The PCYC administration is getting kicked out of its premises. It currently has nowhere to go. The advice I have received from the Town of Victoria Park is that the PCYC does not have permission to run the administration from there and that it will probably be served a notice if it moves in there. The administration is being ripped apart. There is no home for the administration of the PCYC and officers, sworn and unsworn, are being removed from every PCYC in Western Australia. It is a disgrace, and it means that youth crime will go up.

MR P.B. WATSON (Albany) [3.17 pm]: I would like to tell the house about the Police and Community Youth Centre in Albany. Through my kids, I have been involved in junior sport for a long time. I spoke to the Commissioner of Police two Fridays ago and told him that PCYCs should be looked at on an individual basis. The Albany PCYC is run by Senior Constable Terry Eaton, who has been a policeman of the year because of his work with the PCYC.

Mr M.J. Cowper: He is a former Demon.

Mr P.B. WATSON: This issue is more serious than football. We are talking about young kids and how they will be affected. If the member for Murray–Wellington wants to talk, he should stand up and talk to the matter of public interest; otherwise, he should say nothing.

We built the new Albany PCYC with the help of the PCYC and the community of Albany. Terry Eaton and I met the Commissioner of Police at the Albany PCYC two Fridays ago. There are usually 80 young kids at the PCYC on a Friday night; kids who would normally be out on the streets of Albany. At the PCYC the kids play sport, paint and draw while there is a police presence. They do all sorts of activities, including boxing. At nine o'clock the kids are taken home. The PCYC not only gets them off the street, but also buses them home.

A couple of weeks ago I was helping a young Indigenous basketballer learn how to umpire. I asked him what was going on in town. He said that he goes to the PCYC on Friday nights. When I asked why, he said because Terry is there and because it is safe. He said he goes there on Friday nights so that he is not walking the streets and getting belted up by gangs. When we walked through the centre, all the kids would say, "G'day, Mr Eaton". They have respect for the police. A couple of weeks ago at the PCYC ball, the senior sergeant said that when kids attend the PCYC on Friday nights, the police do not have any trouble on the streets—none at all. However, when there is a break over Christmas and the PCYC is not open, the incidence of trouble escalates. We have been told that the government wants to get police officers onto the streets to stop kids before they get into trouble. The 80 kids who go to the Albany PCYC on a Friday night are in a good environment because of the police presence. They respect the police. The skate park is next door and kids know that that park is safe because of the police presence in the PCYC. What happens is that if there is an issue or a bit of trouble, one of the kids

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will come in and say, “Mr Eaton, come out and have a look at this.” There is that presence there all the time. Parents feel confident that they can take their kids down there on a Friday night.

Tanya Crabtree is the manager. She is going to get sucked into the police department in Albany. Terry will go too. The minister cannot tell me, given the lack of police in our region, that these guys will not be put into other areas. When a person rings up for a call-out in Albany they are told, “Look, we’ve only got so many cars and police to go out.” What will happen is that Terry Eaton will be there and he will be the one who goes out. We talk about father figures or role models. We have Terry Eaton and his wife, Rosie, who is down there all the time, and Tanya Crabtree. The hours that they work down there and do not get paid for are remarkable. They are volunteer hours that can never be replaced. Once they come out, we will need to find someone to fill the gap. There are fewer and fewer volunteers in today’s society. I ask the minister to seriously reconsider this decision. I think it is the wrong decision. The people who are the most vulnerable in the community will be most affected.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Minister for Police) [3.20 pm]: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the matter of public interest moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I say from the outset that every member on this side of the house, and I am sure every member on the other side of the house, supports the PCYCs and the work they do in assisting our young people. There is no argument there at all. We have just as much commitment to PCYCs and the work they do as opposition members. In fact, I think the PCYCs waned under their government.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You’re taking the police away.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, we are not taking police away. That is where the opposition is misconstruing the truth. Members opposite are not being honest, particularly the Leader of the Opposition. It is quite a change to see his head. I saw his photograph in the press release. I take exception to the press release because the Leader of the Opposition was not being truthful in it at all.

Mr M. McGowan: You are seeing me now.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We did not see much of you in the past! The heading of the press release is “Barnett Government takes the P out of PCYC”. I think the Leader of the Opposition is doing that to the public because he is not being truthful with it; he is not delivering honesty to the people of Western Australia.

Mr P. Papalia: Who do you think they’ll believe?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am not going to take interjections from the member for Warnbro; he does not know what he is talking about.

I will quote from the Leader of the Opposition’s press release and then he will have to stand up and tell me whether he backs it, whether he believes it is honest and truthful, or whether it is misleading. The Leader of the Opposition might want to get it out so that he can read it.

Mr M. McGowan: Can you explain your argument?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am going to explain my argument, but the Leader of the Opposition might want to read his press release line by line.

Mr M. McGowan: How come this document is here about them all being transitioned?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: We are talking about the Leader of the Opposition’s honesty and his press release at this moment in time. The press release states —

Mr McGowan said documents obtained by Labor revealed the Barnett Government’s secret plans to remove police officers from every PCYC in Western Australia.

That is an absolute lie. There is no secret plan whatsoever!

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr M. McGOWAN: I request that the minister withdraw the imputation that he just made. Everyone knows that that word is unparliamentary. The Leader of the House ought to know that better than anybody.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: They know it is a complete and utter untruth. It is a deliberate untruth. The Leader of the Opposition knows that and everybody else knows that.

Withdrawal of Remark

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Mr E.S. RIPPER: It is unparliamentary to use the words “deliberate untruth”.

Mr R.F. Johnson: No, it’s not. They’ve been used many times by you lot.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): I am sure the police minister will withdraw it.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Do you want me to withdraw that as well?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Yes, please.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What we have seen is an absolute untruth; an absolute untruth!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, just get on with it please.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Mr Acting Speaker, I would like to be able to deliver my speech in my way if I may. I think that is fair.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Yes—well, if there are no interjections.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I have been criticised a lot by members opposite.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, you are drawing interjections by reading out someone’s press release, so accept it.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am trying to point out that the Leader of the Opposition is not letting the truth get in the way of what he thinks is a good story.

Let me just quote what the Leader of the Opposition says in his press release.

Dr A.D. Buti: Let’s worry about you.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Let us worry about the truth. The member for Armadale should worry about the truth. It reads —

“As well as the removal of police officers, the Barnett Government also intends to remove Police Department public servants from PCYCs in coming months,” Mr McGowan said.

This is the important bit —

“This has already resulted in the closure of two PCYCs, ...

The Leader of the Opposition should listen because this is about him misleading people. Scarborough and Hilton, the two he referred to in his press release, have been closed due to the issues referred to in the earlier paragraph.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That is not even on the list.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Let me tell members opposite this —

Mr M. McGowan: Is this the best you can do about this serious issue—what you regard as tiny holes in a press release?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The Leader of the Opposition has caused people in that area a lot concern because they believed what he said.

Mr M. McGowan: You are trying to debate a big issue and that’s the best you can do.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is the best the Leader of the Opposition can do with his press release.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: What an absolute untruth.

Mr M. McGowan: Why isn’t the Premier up answering it?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members! You have had your chance on this side, members. Let the Minister for Police have his say. Minister, if you challenge people on the other side, you will have to expect to get challenges back.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Mr Acting Speaker, I am not canvassing your ruling, obviously, but I do not challenge the members; I am the member on his feet; they are challenging me.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Just get on with it, minister.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I have an email from people within police that reads —

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Hilton PCYC has completed major renovations and is in operation. There are two police officers based at Hilton PCYC.

Mr M. McGowan: Not for long.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The Leader of the Opposition said the Hilton PCYC had closed. He cannot have it both ways.

The email goes on to say —

The biggest issue with it is that Mr McGowan has remarked that Hilton PCYC ... has closed which is incorrect.

... The centre is actually open and bustling.

They are doing well down there; they have just had a refurbishment. Is the Leader of the Opposition going to apologise for misleading people with his erroneous press release? I hope he is, because it is totally untrue.

Let me get to the core of the issue. We are talking about PCYCs and the fact that over a period the commissioner wants to withdraw sworn police officers and some unsworn police officers from PCYCs. That is a decision he is entitled to make as the Commissioner for Police. It is his responsibility.

Dr A.D. Buti: Do you support it?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Why does the member for Armadale not be quiet for five minutes?

It his responsibility and his authority to allocate his police officers wherever he wants.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Meanwhile Rome is burning.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: He wasn't entitled to make it when we were in government, I can tell you that.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Shadow Minister for Police!

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You're useless.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The Leader of the Opposition quoted from pieces of paper, letters and various other documents. Let me quote a PCYC document headed "Situational Analysis: WA Police resource withdrawal from PCYC".

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I've got that one.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Good.

I draw the member's attention to the first dot point at the very top of page 2 where it reads —

PCYC accepts the withdrawal of police staff, thus allowing for The Federation to take full managerial control of each of its centres, as this is vital for the long term sustainability and success of the organisation.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: They are accepting the fact that the officers have been withdrawn.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: That is what PCYC is saying.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Don't try to mislead the house.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Mr Speaker, are you going to allow this person to keep interjecting on me?

The ACTING SPEAKER: I am in charge of the house. Member for Midland, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I have had meetings with Freddie Tan and members of the PCYC board. They are fully aware of the plan to eventually take serving police officers out of PCYCs —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: No support from your government to retain the officers.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Certainly, the commissioner has the view, and I think the PCYC also accepts the view, that it is a waste —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: What about you; you're the minister; what's your view?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Why does the member for Midland not be quiet?

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The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Members, if you want to have a meeting, could you please go outside? It is hard enough for the Hansard reporters to hear at the best of times.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The commissioner has a view—it is also held by other people—that a lot of the jobs that the sworn and unsworn police officers have been doing in many of the police and citizens youth clubs have been managerial work, administration work and fundraising. That is not seen by the commissioner and many others as being core police work.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It's very good crime prevention work though, isn't it? It is community policing work; it is fantastic.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: In 2011 the police formed a youth police squad, which is taking a more serious approach to focusing in on prolific and priority offenders in our young people, and also youth at risk. That is not just youth at risk of being abused or sexually abused, but youth at risk of being involved with and initiated in starting a life of crime. That is what they have been putting a lot of their efforts and focus into and that is where they want to put these police officers, so that they can deal with the young people who are very vulnerable. A lot of the kids who go to the PCYCs do so because it is a good place to go. They have good sporting facilities, they have a good time, and, yes, it is safe. I would hope that every youth club in Western Australia would be considered a safe place, and they should be no different from PCYCs. However, this is what the commissioner wants to do. Also, these PCYCs are not going to close because some police officers will be taken out of them.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Some of them will.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: No, they are not going to close, because funding is coming from police to assist in making up those positions from which police will be withdrawn. I am actively pursuing ways to raise some extra funding, and I am very hopeful that funds will be forthcoming from across government. This government will be showing its commitment to young people and the PCYCs we have. In fact, we want to try to expand the PCYCs throughout WA; that is what we want to do. We do not want to see them diminished; we want to see them expand because we have given that commitment. It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition to get a thought bubble one day and forget history; he did the same thing the other day when he was talking about police station closures. He forgets that the previous Labor government actually closed 13 police stations, and the opposition accuses us of closing police stations. We have reopened three that it closed. This government is committed to our police officers and the work they do, be it with young people or any age group in society. We are there to try to help protect everybody in our society—young people, old people, those at risk, and vulnerable people. We certainly believe that PCYC —

Mr P. Papalia: I don't think you have convinced your backbench! I don't think they're very confident.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I have to say that I accepted a grievance from the member for Geraldton this morning, and he was more than happy at the end of the day —

Mr P. Papalia: He's left the chamber, and the others won't be very confident.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: — to hear what I had to say and the commitments that we and the police are giving.

I will conclude my remarks because I know the member for Scarborough wants to say a few words about her local PCYC, because the opposition has, once again, accused us of closing it down by withdrawing two police officers. That is totally untrue; it is another mistruth deliberately put out there, quite frankly.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You know the council is taking over?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Yes, I know the situation, but I am going to get the member for Scarborough, who is very, very close to the PCYC at Scarborough, to give the truth of the matter, which will completely contradict the mistruth that the Leader of the Opposition stated in his press release issued today. That is what is going to happen. I hope the member for Scarborough will speak after me—unless the Premier wants to—because I think it is important. The opposition has accused this government of closing two PCYCs by taking police officers out of them. That is totally untrue, and I think that the member for Midland will be shown up for the shallow person that she is by not being truthful.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Parliamentary Secretary) [3.34 pm]: I rise to participate in this debate, partly because of my outrage at the comments the Leader of the Opposition made in his media release, in which it was implied that the withdrawal of police officers from the Scarborough Police and Community Youth Centre had resulted in the closure of two PCYCs, Scarborough and Hilton, and would mean the closure of many more of these organisations.

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The Scarborough PCYC has been on a long road. Its lease expired at the City of Stirling facility in July 2010. From July 2010 through to the end of December 2011, Mr Eddie Tan, chief executive officer of the PCYC, and City of Stirling officers were engaged in —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: It's Freddie.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I apologise; Freddie. They were engaged in a range of negotiations in respect of the renewal of the lease of the Scarborough facility. They could not reach an agreement and as a result of that, the City of Stirling viewed its position in respect of that lease as being untenable. According to the resource management committee minutes of 6 December 2011, City of Stirling officers basically recommended that the council order the PCYC to vacate the premises by July next year—that is, July 2012—and for the city to take control of what was no more than a mainstream recreation centre. These are City of Stirling officers, quoted in the minutes.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: How about the member for Midland letting me conclude my remarks?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: You're embarrassing yourself. I'm trying to save you from some embarrassment here.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The member has not visited the Scarborough PCYC and she does not know anything about it.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: I have!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Oh, has she? Did she go to the City of Stirling and ask it to renew the leases?

Mr R.F. Johnson: When?

Mrs M.H. Roberts: When I was Minister for Police, I visited the Scarborough PCYC.

Mr R.F. Johnson: That was years ago!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: According to the council minutes, the council endorsed the officers' comments by voting to agree with their recommendation that it was clear that the council's original intention to provide a lease to the PCYC federation at minimal rent was for the purposes of conducting youth-at-risk programs. They said that this was clearly not happening and that the PCYC had moved from running youth-at-risk programs to providing recreational facilities. The city wanted to resume management of the facility and continue to provide recreational facilities to the existing clientele. The city officers wanted that community recreation centre to shift its shopfront out to Mirrabooka and, as it happens, the only participants engaged in community-based orders at Scarborough PCYC had come from the central corridor, which includes Balga, Girrawheen and Koondoola. There were only six participants engaged in community-based orders, and not one of them actually lived within the catchment of the Scarborough PCYC.

Ms M.M. Quirk: That's because they closed down the Balga one.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Western Australian PCYC chief executive Freddie Tan told the *Stirling Times* that he was extremely disappointed with what he called the penny pinching of the City of Stirling. According to my notes, he stated —

“I have not been impressed at all with the way the City of Stirling has gone about this,” he said.

“The place is doing well and obviously the local government sees it as a revenue opportunity.”

These are the words of Mr Freddie Tan, the CEO of the PCYC. These comments were made in December 2011 to the *Stirling Times*, long before any of the accusations that have come before this house were made.

Senior Constable Joe Phelan, who was in charge of programs at Scarborough PCYC until PCYC WA closed the facility —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Oh, so it's actually closed? You've actually confirmed what the Leader of the Opposition said?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: He said that although the PCYC would be losing a great facility, a centre in the city's eastern suburbs made sense.

Mr M. McGowan: So it did close?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: This is Senior Constable Joe Phelan, the former Scarborough PCYC programs officer. According to my notes, the *Stirling Times* quoted him as saying —

“I don't think it would affect the day-to-day running of the Scarborough centre a great deal,” he said.

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... The eastern area of the City of Stirling suits me because most of the people I work with are in the Balga–Mirrabooka area.”

So before members opposite come into this place making erroneous accusations as to why the Scarborough PCYC has closed, they need to get their facts straight. If members opposite happen to google the PCYC WA website and have a look at the comment, they will see it says —

Dear valued staff, volunteers, members and supporters —

I am quoting from the PCYC webpage of today —

It is with sadness that I have to inform you of the closure of Scarborough PCYC, effective 25 February.

Unfortunately the City of Stirling —

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Member for Midland, let me finish. For goodness’ sake! The website states —

Unfortunately the City of Stirling has chosen not to renew our lease of the facility at Gildercliffe Street.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our loyal staff, volunteers and members who made the Scarborough PCYC the thriving community centre that it was.

That is on the PCYC website. The reasons for Scarborough PCYC’s closure are completely unrelated to the MPI that has been brought before the house today. If members opposite had bothered to do a bit of homework, and even a little internet homework, they would find that the accusation that has been brought to the house today about the reasons for the closure of Scarborough PCYC are completely baseless and completely untrue.

I find it utterly ridiculous and offensive that members opposite have not taken the time to find out what is happening in my community before they start dragging issues concerning the Scarborough PCYC into this place and blaming our government for its closure. Our government had nothing to do with its closure. The City of Stirling wants to run that facility as a recreation centre. The City of Stirling has seen an opportunity to provide those services to the community, and the PCYC does not have a picture in that framework of management. That is why the PCYC is no longer in Scarborough.

My local community is outraged that its PCYC has been closed. The doors have been shut. Mr Freddie Tan has closed the doors of the PCYC, and all programs have been suspended until 12 April. Right at the moment, we do not know what is happening with the equipment when it is going to reopen and what the City of Stirling’s plans are for that facility and for the future sporting opportunities for the children of my electorate. I want to set the record straight. What has been brought to the house today is completely irrelevant as to the reasons for the closure of the Scarborough PCYC.

MS A.R. MITCHELL (Kingsley) [3.42 pm]: I wish to make just some general comments about the PCYCs—police and community youth centres—throughout Western Australia. I will preface my remarks by saying that I have not visited some of these for about three and a half years now. Certainly, it has been interesting. I have seen some very, very good ones; I have seen some that have been quite disappointing. Even back then, I started to question whether this was the best way for these organisations to be operating. I support what the member for Albany has said. The PCYC in Albany is fantastic, but the leadership there is critical to it. Terry Eaton, as the member has said, has been and still is, I understand, an integral part of that PCYC.

The one thing that I think PCYCs are going through, and what they are trying to work out, is where they fit now and what they are doing. I guess it has always been police and citizens, or police and community, and in many ways it has swung around, so it is more community programs than police programs. It does not mean that either aspect is out; it just means that the focus may have changed. Even with the Albany PCYC—I have been there—it is energetic and it is enthusiastic, but it is more about youth programs and recreational programs. It is a great place for people to go—there is no question about that—but the focus has changed. Things are done differently. It is a credit to Terry that he has maintained such enthusiasm and vibrancy and he has a great relationship. But he is unique in the work that he does. I will say again that many of these facilities have become and should become community programs, because change is inevitable and there is need to be progressive. However, there is still very much a place for police in the youth-at-risk programs. I am not sure how it will work from there —each community will be different. I also mention the Geraldton PCYC. I know the member for Geraldton has spoken already, but I recall when I first visited the Geraldton PCYC —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members, I want to hear what the member on her feet is saying, not what you are doing across the chamber.

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Ms A.R. MITCHELL: Once again, I would say that when I visited it, it was a new centre and it was a fantastic centre, but it was only open between 9.00 am and 3.00 pm, which did not quite seem to fit with me as to what it should be doing. It was almost like the episode of *Yes Minister* or *Yes, Prime Minister* about the hospitals; it was a wonderful facility as long as there were not any youth at risk in there, or any youth there at all! There was just a reluctance on the part of the people involved to be involved in the work that they should have been involved in. It was also evident to us then that literally across the road was a very vibrant aquatic and recreation centre that was doing much of the work that the PCYC could have, or should have, been doing. Once again I guess it was due to the location of the place, the fact that it did not have the leadership or the vibrancy, and that it did not provide a service. That may well have changed, and I understand that it has, but at that time I could see that there was a severe question mark over what the police felt their role was in this work and what could be done when something was working very effectively across the road.

I also mention the Broome PCYC. Once again, we would think that there could not be a better place to have a PCYC than in Broome, and it was located in a different part of the town. What really surprised me about that PCYC was that it basically shut down between about April and October. It became a caravan and camping ground for all the tourists that came up, because there was a shortage of tourist accommodation. I could not think of anything more frustrating or worse than to have a venue that was perceived to be absolutely vital to the community become a caravan and camping ground, and yet it still is, because it is the cheapest caravan and camping ground, and pets can be taken there. Therefore, it is very, very popular. It might be fundraising for the PCYC, but that is not what it is meant to be there for. I think this is the problem that the Commissioner of Police is dealing with, this realignment of what the PCYCs are actually there for and what they are trying to achieve.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [3.47 pm]: I want to address the second part of the motion relating to school-based police officers. I think for the benefit of members, particularly those elected at the last election, they should be aware of some history. During the term of the Liberal–National coalition government in the 1990s, there were 38 school-based police officers. I was the education minister through most of that period and there were successive police ministers. It was a good program; I was very strongly supportive of it and I remain so today. What happened at the very beginning of 2001 was a change of government, and then what happened —

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: During the 1990s there were 38 —

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

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

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is a matter of fact that during the 1990s there were 38 police officers and they were removed. There was an agreement in 2001 between the Department of Education and the police. The member for Midland happened to be the police minister at the time and the program was closed.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Not true.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is what happened.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: No it's not.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is what happened.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: If you look up the *Hansard* records you'll see that I, as member for Midland, asked you a question as Minister for Education as to why I was losing mine.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Midland! I call you to order for the third time. Unless you want to go home early, I do not want to hear any more from you until the Premier has finished his speech.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Therefore, the program was finished. If the Labor Party believed in school-based police officers, it had eight years to rebuild the program, having seen it closed. But it did not; for eight years it did not do it. The Labor Party closed the program, it did not rebuild it and now it comes in here pretending to support school-based police officers.

Mr M. McGowan: It wasn't our promise.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Oh, it was not the Labor Party's promise. You are absolutely the straw man, are you not? You are the straw man; there is no doubt about it.

Under this government there has been quite a bit of discussion about the issue. I have discussed it personally with the Commissioner of Police, as have the Minister for Police and the Minister for Education.

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I will tell members what is happening. A number of things are happening with the relationship between police officers and schools. A police sergeant has been designated to coordinate police activities within schools, particularly if there is a violent incident in a school. That is coordinated by one police sergeant who is in place coordinating police in various police stations. That is important to deal with incidents of violence or attacks on students and teachers. There is also a program of keeping our workplace safe, which involves police officers working with principals and teachers on advice in schools on prevention and management of violent incidents. Crime Stoppers has come into schools—Kinross College and Southern River College are two examples. Particular programs have been put into schools where there are a number of disaffected young people and these occur in Broome, Rockingham and Gosnells, to give some examples. Currently, discussions are going on with police and education about how to strengthen the participation of policing in schools. Therefore, it is a little bit rich for the Labor Party to come in here and say this.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [3.51 pm]: What do we have here today? We have an opposition that values and understands the need for police to be involved in police and citizens youth clubs. We have a government that in its 27 minutes had a Premier that did not even mention PCYCs. We have a police minister who does not value the presence of police in PCYCs. The member for Kingsley talked about how PCYCs are evolving. She said they have been around since 1941 and that the involvement of the police has been very important. As the Leader of the Opposition said, police are needed to create role models to hopefully focus these young people on the right road. But, no, we do not have the police minister supporting that. He believes that PCYCs should just be YCs; they should just be youth centres and that the involvement of police is not necessary. What do we have in regards to the Premier? We had him out of the chamber for part of the debate and in the chamber for part of the debate sitting and looking like he was sleeping, but he may have been thinking about his contribution. What was his contribution? It was to not even mention PCYCs and to talk about the role of police in schools.

Let us go back to the last election. During the election campaign, it was reported on 26 August 2008 that —

Mr Barnett and shadow education minister Peter Collier pledged to reinstate school-based police, dismantled by Labor, and said the officers would be sourced from the extra 500 police the Liberal Party promised recently.

There was also a report on the ABC, which stated —

Mr Barnett says the extra money for behavioural management will be used to reinstate school based police officers, appoint more psychologists and increase funding for the school chaplaincy program.

...

“Having a police presence around our schools, for those schools who wish it, is an opportunity to prevent those young people entering into a life of crime.

During the election campaign, the Premier understood the importance of the need for police to be in schools. What was his contribution today? “Oh, there are a couple of little programs around the place and we’re looking at it. We’ve been in government only three years and now we’re getting around to it.” During the election campaign it was important because having a police presence in our schools is very important to prevent young people entering a life of crime. Even after the election, in an interview with Simon Beaumont, the Premier stated —

What I do support though is a greater police presence in our schools.

What was his contribution today? “Oh, there’s a little bit of a contribution; there are a few little police here and there—nothing major. We don’t mind breaching our election promise because we’re in government now. We’ll talk about maybe the presence of police in schools when the next election campaign is on.” What was the reason for the breach?

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Extract from Hansard
[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 1 March 2012]
p543c-554a

Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr Eric Ripper;
Acting Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Colin Barnett; Dr Tony Buti

Ayes (25)

Ms L.L. Baker
Dr A.D. Buti
Ms A.S. Carles
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms J.M. Freeman
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr J.C. Kobelke

Mr F.M. Logan
Mrs C.A. Martin
Mr M. McGowan
Mr A.P. O’Gorman
Mr P. Papalia
Mr J.R. Quigley
Ms M.M. Quirk

Mr E.S. Ripper
Mrs M.H. Roberts
Ms R. Saffioti
Mr T.G. Stephens
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr A.J. Waddell

Mr P.B. Watson
Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Noes (29)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr I.C. Blayney
Mr J.J.M. Bowler
Mr I.M. Britza
Mr T.R. Buswell
Mr G.M. Castrilli

Mr V.A. Catania
Dr E. Constable
Mr J.H.D. Day
Mr J.M. Francis
Mr B.J. Grylls
Dr K.D. Hames
Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mr A.P. Jacob

Mr R.F. Johnson
Mr A. Krsticevic
Mr W.R. Marmion
Mr J.E. McGrath
Mr P.T. Miles
Ms A.R. Mitchell
Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr C.C. Porter

Mr D.T. Redman
Mr M.W. Sutherland
Mr T.K. Waldron
Dr J.M. Woollard
Mr A.J. Simpson (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr J.N. Hyde
Mr M.P. Murray

Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr M.J. Cowper

Question thus negatived.