

OUT-OF-CONTROL GATHERINGS

528. Mr C.D. HATTON to the Minister for Police:

My question relates to out-of-control parties. It was great to be at Maylands dog operations on the weekend. In 2012, the Liberal–National government introduced a range of measures to tackle the problem of out-of-control parties. Can the minister please update the house on the results of these measures?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Balcatta for his interest in these matters and for raising the issue of out-of-control gatherings. Many members were in the house and they would recall that in 2012 Parliament passed legislation to create an offence for organising an out-of-control gathering. It created an offence for a responsible adult allowing a child to hold a gathering that became out of control. At the time, we prescribed that an out-of-control party would be a gathering of 12 or more people with at least two people engaged in criminal activities, such as disorderly behaviour, disorderly conduct or behaviour that causes fear and alarm to the surrounding properties. The legislation allows the courts to order a person to pay costs for police attendance and damage that occurs as a result of an out-of-control gathering. It carries a maximum penalty of 12 months' imprisonment and a \$12 000 fine. This has been an incredibly successful piece of legislation, member for Balcatta. We backed up our out-of-control gatherings legislation with a funding commitment by government to assist police and ensure that they were resourced to enforce the legislation and also to manage these out-of-control gatherings that were becoming a significant problem. The government put \$2.5 million into training nine additional police dogs; fitting out the dogs' kennels; and two purpose-built police vehicles, at the time known as the "riot buses". Since the legislation was introduced, 52 out-of-control gatherings have been registered. There have been seven so far this year and 98 people have been charged with offences under the legislation. A total of 49 of those offences were specifically for holding a gathering that became out of control. Importantly, the court has ordered that offenders repay police \$37 664 for the cost of police attendance at these out-of-control gatherings. When we debated this legislation in the house, the member for Midland said —

... we recognise and assert that the passage of this legislation will be an empty gesture unless it is backed up by proper police resourcing.

Guess what? It got backed up by proper police resourcing.

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We had the member for Armadale saying that this was going to be the end of the backyard barbecue in Western Australia. Police were going to run some kind of jackboot parade through prayer gatherings, church gatherings and choir gatherings. It did not happen. This legislation has been incredibly successful. It has reduced the number of out-of-control gatherings.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Midland, I call you to order for the first time and the member for Armadale for the first time. I think you have made the point, minister, so can you wind this up? Thank you.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I would be pleased to, Mr Speaker.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

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

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: More importantly, very recently in the member for Midland's electorate in Hazelmere, the Midland local policing team and the Ellenbrook police successfully shut down an out-of-control gathering. Two people were charged with the offence of holding an out-of-control gathering. Police are still doing some further investigation on that. Out of that, police have worked to shut down the utilities supplying that property. They are working with the City of Swan to have the property demolished—a demolition order was issued. It is working. The number of parties has come down. It has been a success and it has been used absolutely appropriately by WA Police, as we on this side always knew it would be.