

STOP-AND-SEARCH LAWS — INTRODUCTION IN VICTORIA

57. Mrs L.M. HARVEY to the Minister for Police:

Our stop-and-search laws will soon become a very important tool in policing in this state. I notice that the Victorian government has also introduced similar laws to try to get illegal weapons off Victorian streets. Could the minister please update the house on how the Victorian model compares with our own model for stop-and-search?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON replied:

I thank the member for the question and her genuine interest in trying to fight violent crime on our streets in Western Australia. The member is quite right that the progressive Labor Victorian government, which is living in the twenty-first century, is trying its best to deal with violent crime on its streets. It should be compared with the Western Australian Labor Party, which is still living in the Dark Ages. I have to say to start with that the difference between the WA Labor Party and the Victorian Labor Party is amazing. I would like to share with the house a few quotes from the Victorian Minister for Police. He said —

Victoria Police officers will have new random search and move on powers to tackle street violence under a suite of tough new laws introduced to the Parliament by the Brumby Labor Government today.

He goes on to say —

“Anti-social behaviour has no place on our streets and these new laws introduced by our government will help keep Victorian communities safe so that people can enjoy public spaces.

The media release went on to say —

Mr Cameron said the new laws were part of a suite of reforms designed to help keep Victorians safe. “Our new laws have been questioned by some for being too tough and impeding on people’s rights to go about their business, but we say a higher priority is that people have the right to go about their business without being stabbed ...

I have one last quote from the Victorian police minister. He comments on that state’s first operation —

“These laws have proven successful already. During the first operation, 182 people were searched around the Footscray railway station with seven people detected carrying 12 weapons including a machete and another person in possession of drugs ...

Victoria Police managed to get all those weapons off the street. The reason I raise that is because I would like to share with the house the problems that we have in WA, which have escalated over the past 10 years, particularly under the previous Labor government. The total number of offences involving weapons in 1999 was 2 406. In 2008–09 it was 9 260. Of these, 2 511 weapons offences occurred on public —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Is the minister going to table this?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I would be happy to. My friend the member should be ashamed of this because she was a police minister once—a shameful one, I have to say!

Mr T.R. Buswell: And she built the arena!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: And she built the arena!

That is an increase of 2 000 since 1999. Assault offences involving weapons —

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am coming to my friend the member for Mindarie!

Assault offences involving weapons on public transport have increased ten-fold since 1999, to 976 in 2008–09. Overall, the total number of reported offences involving weapons in a public place has increased from 1 404 —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: My friend the member for Warnbro can laugh. The opposition should hang its heads in shame, because this happened under its government! I repeat that —

Mr M. McGowan: Get on with it!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Do not tell me to get on!

There were 1 404 in 1999 and 4 685 in 2008–09. I am happy to table those because these are the latest statistics from police that show this dreadful increase in the number of weapons that have been found on our streets.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Will the minister give us a breakdown of the various categories of weapons offences?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I will give the opposition everything I can, my friend. As I say, this happened under the previous government's watch. What I find hypocritical is the comments from the member for Mindarie, who has done a complete backflip. He supported the member for Girrawheen's private member's bill, which was far more draconian than people have accused this government's bill as being. Now he is opposed to any sort of stop and search at all. The comments he makes now are nothing but a huge backflip and are a disgrace and a shame on what the Labor Party —

Mr J.R. Quigley: Backflips are okay as long as they are done gracefully and you land on your feet! This government has made a backflip on Butler Road!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: He suffers verbal diarrhoea; that's the trouble.

A poll that came out in December, at the time people were doing their Christmas shopping, may not have been noticed by many people. It was a data analysis flash poll taken in December 2009. The question was: do you agree with the legislation; that is, the Liberal-National government's stop-and-search legislation? It is very interesting to see the results. My Labor colleagues might be interested to know that 68 per cent of ALP voters supported it. Thirty-three per cent of the Greens supported that poll. One-third of the green voters support our legislation.

Mr J.R. Quigley: And *The West* reported by February that it had slumped to 48 per cent!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I won't repeat my comments about that.

Another important area that members should remember is out of the undecided voters; that is, people who do not necessarily vote for one thing or the other —

Mr M.P. Whitely: None of that makes it right. It is bad legislation!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Eighty-one per cent of those —

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean!

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Your colleagues in Victoria are more progressive than you are! They care more about crime on our streets.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It is bad legislation.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I formally call you for the first time. Minister for Police, I hope you have reached the conclusion of this answer.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: Mr Speaker, I have reached a conclusion.

The SPEAKER: Before I give the Leader of the Opposition the call—Minister for Police, you indicated there were some documents you were going to table.

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: I am delighted to, Mr Speaker. It reflects great shame on the previous government.

[See paper 1902.]