

LAW AND ORDER — COMMUNITY SAFETY

693. Mr J.M. FRANCIS to the Attorney General:

I would like to ask the Attorney General about the difference between this government's strong law and order record compared —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I formally call you to order for the first time today. Member for Joondalup, you can join the list. All I want is the question.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I refer, Attorney General, to previous stuff-ups like the Supreme Court great escape, the dismantling of the graffiti task force, the demolishing of —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Forrestfield and the member for Willagee are both called to order for the first time today. If members want question time to finish at this point, I think they know what to do; I think you are instructing yourselves.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Further, there is the demolishing of the rural crime squad and botched legislation like truth in sentencing.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, you might be amusing yourselves. I am sure there are people in this place who would like to ask questions; there may even be people in this place who would like to be able to answer some questions. I will instruct members right now, if there are any further interjections into this question being asked, I will finish question time at this point. I hope everyone has heard; I am expecting that you have. I give the call back to the member for Jandakot.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: In light of Labor's law and order failures, can the Attorney General please outline what this government has done to improve the safety of the community and reduce the overall crime rate in Western Australia?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Continue, Attorney General.

Mr C.C. PORTER replied:

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the member for his question and the inimitable style in which he delivers his questions. The question is about what this government is doing to protect the citizens —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members!

Mr C.C. PORTER: The question was about what this government is doing to protect the citizens of Western Australia. The simple answer is that this government is reducing crime. Yesterday, over the length of a full matter of public interest debate, we heard Labor's views on this issue. In fact, that MPI started with "That Labor expresses deep concern at the level of crime". It is quite proper to express concern about the level of crime. In the view of governments, levels of crime are always too high. If Labor is expressing concern about the level of crime that we are experiencing right here and right now, I can only imagine the level of concern that the Labor Party felt back in 2008. It must have been plumbing the stygian depths of concern. It is also amazing to me how well the Labor Party kept that concern hidden, considering how concerned it must have been. The facts of this matter are clear and available on the police website for any Western Australian citizen. When we measure this crime accurately and fairly, as the police do, and when we look at the last financial year of the Labor government—that is, July 2007 to June 2008—we see that 211 736 offences were reported on the police measure.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr C.C. PORTER: Yesterday, the member for Midland gave four pieces of evidence of the crime wave affecting Perth. Between leaving the chamber and going up to my office, one of those pieces of evidence turned out not to be true because the person had recanted and said that the offence never happened. Between leaving the chamber and going up to my office, one of the four pieces of evidence disappeared; it evaporated. The real evidence is statistical. The statistics show that 211 736 offences were reported in the last year of Labor's term in government and 185 128 offences were reported in the last financial year of the Liberal–National government;

that is, 26 608 fewer offences were reported in the last year of our government than were reported in the last year of the Labor government.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr C.C. PORTER: Member for Midland, that is an entire state electorate worth of human beings in Western Australia who did not suffer an offence under this government, but who suffered under the Labor government. For the benefit of the member for Midland, who likes statistics in pictures because they are easy to understand, the red shows the total reported offences under Labor. Members will see the chart there.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: What a dodgy little graph!

Mr C.C. PORTER: Again, the figures show that 211 736 offences were reported in the last year of the Labor government and 185 128 offences were reported in the last year under this government.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, you were here yesterday when I mentioned something about people yelling across the chamber. I am not interested in it. Member for Midland, I formally call you to order for the second time today.

Mr C.C. PORTER: The member for Midland just said “full credit to us”. That is the first time I have heard the opposition take credit for a government initiative that has decreased crime three years into the new government! That has to be some kind of record. Under this government 26 608 Western Australians are no longer the victims of crime. If the member for Midland liked that graph, she will also like the next one, albeit I did not have time to laminate it. This graph shows the number of assaults reported in the financial year ending June 2008 in red and in the financial year ending June 2011 in blue. In 2008, under the Labor government, 14 257 assaults were reported. Under the last year of the Liberal–National government, 13 082 assaults were reported. In the last year of this government there were 1 175 fewer victims of assault than in the last year of the Labor government.

Mr J.M. Francis: Is that net or percentage of population?

Mr C.C. PORTER: That is the total number of assaults. The net decrease in crime on that overall figure is 14 per cent. These are good results.

Mr E.S. Ripper: A bloke rang talkback this morning and he said it sounded like you were swimming in molasses.

Mr C.C. PORTER: Talkback is never easy, I have to say.

The opposition’s fundamental problem is that it cannot decide to say whether there is a crime wave and deny the decrease or try to explain away the decrease so that the government does not get credit for it. This year, the Leader of the Opposition asked, “What will the Premier do to combat this crime wave?” Last year, the shadow Attorney General said, “What has brought about this decline? It is not government policy.” Which is it? Is it a crime wave or a decline that we are grappling to explain away?

Ultimately, there has been a 14 per cent decrease in overall reported crime; 26 600 fewer Western Australians have suffered being victims of crime under the last year of the Liberal–National government compared with under the Labor government. We can do better for sure. Crime is at unacceptable levels, but this government has made inroads into the overall rate of reported crime.