

LAW AND ORDER AGENDA — LIBERAL–NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

729. Mr M.W. SUTHERLAND to the Minister for Police:

The Liberal–National government has followed an uncompromising law and order agenda. Can the minister please outline to the house some of our achievements over the last four years to protect the Western Australian community?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for the question and indeed his strong interest in law and order matters.

The Liberal–National government has consistently made decisions in keeping with our beliefs and our policies. Our belief is that the fundamental role of police is to detect offending and to drive down crime. We believe that our police need to be funded appropriately. We believe they need to have clear laws, robust powers and robust protections to enable them to go about their activities with confidence. We believe on this side of the house that if we put more criminals away in jail, we will have fewer offenders in the community, and we believe that the courts and the Department of Corrective Services need to be funded and equipped to support the police in the important job that they do. We have increased the budget, member for Mount Lawley, over the four years we have been in government, by 25 per cent, which is double the rate of population growth in the state. We have put more police on the street. We have recruited 180 additional police officers and 120 police auxiliary officers.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We are currently engaged in a recruitment program that will deliver 170 additional police officers, and 30 additional police auxiliary officers. In addition, we have introduced legislation, and we are supporting programs to assist police in targeting particular offending. We are supporting police in targeting the prolific priority offenders.

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We have a more stringent approach to parole. We have reinstated the Graffiti Taskforce, introduced laws for impounding the motor vehicles of repeat offenders, and introduced mandatory sentencing for those who assault police officers. Yesterday, this Parliament passed legislation that will empower police to have a serious impact on organised crime in this state. That is legislation that WA Police has been watching very, very closely and very much awaiting.

The member for Midland and those opposite claim that this is a failure and crime is on the way up; nothing could be further from the truth. In 2007–08, there were 211 736 reported offences. Our figures from last year, compared with the last year under those opposite, show 5.3 per cent fewer reported offences against the person, with a 10.8 per cent decrease in reported offences against property. Overall crime is nine per cent down compared with the last year Labor was in office. What that translates to is 19 200 —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I do not need commentary throughout the Minister for Police's answer to this question. I do not need unnecessary commentary and I do not want to hear any.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: That equates to 19 200 fewer victims of crime in this state in the last financial year, compared with the year we came into government. If members are interested, crime in this quarter has shown a continual trend downwards, with 2.4 per cent fewer offences overall.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: Compared with what period?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Compared with this quarter last year, so we are heading in the right direction.

Going into the future, in the context of this state's growing population and the increased demand that will place on police resources, this Liberal government will make sure that police are well resourced to continue combating crime in our community. We are committed to assisting the police in driving down crime. We are working on having police undertake less paperwork and having less red tape to deal with as they go about their duties, and having less time behind a desk and more time out on the street. We think that is going to work. We are working on policies to safeguard officer welfare and wellbeing, particularly in the area of mental health. We will also implement any legislative and practical measure we need to, to ensure that police officers in this state can go about keeping the community safe and locking up those people who need to be behind bars in the full confidence that they have the support of this Liberal–National state government 100 per cent of the way.

