

POLICE — STAFFING — RURAL AND REGIONAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**443. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Police:**

I have been hearing feedback for some time now about the difficulties associated with attracting and retaining police officers in my electorate. Can the minister please outline what the Liberal–National government is doing to address this issue?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:**

I thank the member for Central Wheatbelt for this question. I also put on the record my thanks to the Minister for Regional Development for the interest he has shown in addressing this particularly vexing issue that faces police from time to time. Attracting and retaining police officers can be problematic in certain locations, and there are various reasons why those problems arise. So we got together and came up with a \$10.5 million package that we took to the electorate to address some of the issues of attracting police officers to, and retaining them in, regional locations. Subsequent to the election, we have worked with the Minister for Regional Development, the WA police executive and the Western Australian Police Union of Workers to come up with that \$10.5 million in funding over four years to address the particular areas with those problems.

I am pleased to announce that, as part of this Liberal–National government commitment, there will be a \$2 000 attraction payment to police officers who go to any regional location, with the exception of the Kimberley and the Pilbara. There will be a \$4 000 attraction payment for police officers who go to Australind, Esperance, Bunbury, Geraldton or Hopetoun. I can see a few members' ears have pricked up as they hear about the incentives in their electorates! There will be a \$4 000 attraction payment for police officers who go to non-coastal locations where there is fully subsidised housing, excluding Kalgoorlie–Boulder, the Pilbara and the Kimberley, but they will get a \$6 000 retention payment. There will be a \$7 000 attraction payment for officers who go to a non-coastal location where there is no fully subsidised housing, plus a \$12 250 retention payment. These retention payments are really important; they will go to police officers who stay in one of these hard-to-fill locations for three and half years or more, and that is designed around having those officers embed themselves in the community. We are trying to select the right people and get them to stay there for longer. There will be an \$11 300 attraction payment for officers who go to non-coastal locations in the great southern and the wheatbelt where there is no fully subsidised housing.

This is going to go a long way towards addressing some of the issues we have had in attracting officers, particularly in the great southern and wheatbelt, when they are not near the coast. If those officers stay for three and a half years, they will receive a \$12 250 retention payment, so it is a really good package. Obviously, money is not the entire solution to this problem, so WA Police has also been working on a range of other strategies to ensure that we can address it. One such strategy is a priority placement strategy: if officers go to a hard-to-fill location, they get their draft pick and are put to the top of the interview list for the next transfer they apply for. A range of other measures are also being put in place.

I am really pleased to have had the opportunity to explain that package to the house; it has been extremely well received by police officers. I appreciate the willingness of the Police Union of Workers, the Minister for Regional Development and the WA police executive to help us to get those payments right so that all the police officers are very happy with it. I thank the member for the question.