

**WA POLICE — KIMBERLEY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY RELATIONS OFFICERS**

*Statement by Minister for Police*

**MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Police)** [2.04 pm]: I rise to inform the house of the appointment of five Indigenous community relations officers to work with WA Police in the Kimberley district. These officers work at a local level, providing a link between local police and the Aboriginal community. However, the role these officers play is far greater than liaison or engagement; it is heavily focused on developing mutual understanding. The ultimate aim of the Indigenous community relations officer role will be to build greater trust and understanding between the Aboriginal community and the police. The five officers recruited include three males and two females. They are experienced in working in their communities and in most cases have a government or non-government organisation work background. They are respected members of the local community, understand the community's dynamics and issues, and have the capacity to engage with all levels of the community.

The officers will regularly meet with families, individuals and community groups, and they also have an understanding of local customs and laws. They will be deployed to assist and support police officers, particularly in investigations, in locating wanted suspects, in custody management, in search warrants, in missing person inquiries and in emergency management. Their duties will also include educating local police officers about issues specific to the local community; undertaking a mediation and conflict resolution role with parties if required; educating the Aboriginal community about local WA Police services; and collaborating with other government agencies and non-government organisations. The officers are based at Broome and Kununurra Police Stations, and close oversight, supervision and accountability of the roles of the officers is being undertaken at a district office level. They wear a "police style" uniform to provide for recognition, physical presence and an element of protection. The local community will be educated to understand that the community relations officers are not police officers. They will not have use-of-force powers; however, they will have common law powers to assist police officers. I am pleased to see the creation of these new roles and I look forward to updating the house on their progress.