

POLICE OFFICER ASSAULTS — MANDATORY TESTING (INFECTIOUS DISEASES) ACT

**51. Mr P.T. MILES to the Minister for Police:**

Before I ask my question, on behalf of the member for Perth, I would like to acknowledge in the Speaker's gallery Marie Slyth from the West Perth Cleaver Street precinct.

Can the minister please inform the house of the improvements that have been implemented to support and protect Western Australian police officers who are spat on, bitten or otherwise assaulted during the course of their duty?

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

I thank the member for Wanneroo for the question and, indeed, for his strong advocacy for this new piece of legislation. It was a key election commitment at the 2013 election. My Mandatory Testing (Infectious Diseases) Act 2014 received royal assent on 3 November 2014 and came into force on 1 January this year. The fulfilment of this commitment in legislation reflects this government's dedication and strong support of our police officers and takes into consideration their welfare, safety and health, given the job that we ask them to do in our community. Prior to this legislation coming into force, when police officers were bitten or spat upon and came into contact with bodily fluids, they had to wait a very long period to be cleared of any possible transmission of blood-borne viruses such as hepatitis C, hepatitis B et cetera. That caused a considerable strain on those police officers, as they had to endure that period during which the virus would incubate before they could understand whether they had contracted a transmissible disease. We took the step to introduce this legislation. Since 1 January, there have been three incidents in which offenders have been compelled under this legislation to provide a blood sample to determine the potential transmission of some of these diseases. Importantly, this blood was obtained without incident.

I am very pleased to report that this legislation is working effectively and as we expected it to. I also reaffirm this government's commitment to looking after the welfare of our police officers in keeping with our mandatory sentencing for those people who assault police officers, as well as the legislation we brought to this place to ensure that police officers who are injured in the line of work and subsequently leave the service of WA Police will continue to have their medical welfare looked after by having their medical benefits continue after their termination from WA Police.