

CRIMINAL CODE INFRINGEMENT NOTICES

223. Ms E. EVANGEL to the Minister for Police:

Before I proceed, I acknowledge on behalf of the member for South Perth the year 6 students from Penrhos College.

Can the minister please advise how the new Criminal Code infringement notices introduced by the Liberal–National government will free up police time and reduce the strain on our courts?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Perth for the question and Mr Speaker for the opportunity to respond.

I was really pleased on Monday to announce the first stage of implementation for the Criminal Code infringement notices here in Western Australia. We have introduced these notices to provide a more efficient policing service in Western Australia and to free up police time and divert police officers to the front line. The way in which the Criminal Code infringement notices will work, member for Perth, is that for minor stealing offences of goods to the value of \$500 and for public disorder offences—such as offensive language, urinating in public and those antisocial behaviour–type offences—police will have the opportunity to issue an infringement notice, rather than take the offender back to the station and process them, thereby involving about three hours' worth of police effort to put all the information into the system. In addition, if the police have to take the matter to court, member for Perth, that may mean two officers are tied up potentially for a day while they wait for an opportunity to give evidence as part of that court process.

We anticipate that the police will issue approximately 7 300 Criminal Code infringements notices in the first year. That is 7 300 offences and offenders diverted from the courts, effectively freeing up the criminal justice system, and of course freeing up police time. Police officers welcome this initiative. It will reduce red tape. It will take them from behind a desk and onto the front line. It will allow us to divert offenders from the criminal justice system and from the courts. The incentive for those offenders, member for Perth, particularly with the shoplifting offences—the stealing offences—of up to \$500 is that if they pay the infringement notice within 28 days, a conviction will not be recorded against them. That means that in the future, if they are looking for a police clearance, for example, they will not have that offence recorded as a conviction against them, which for some people who engage in this activity is a big incentive indeed. It is also an opportunity for us to divert offenders from the justice system and free up police officer time, as I said previously. This will be rolled out effective in the Perth CBD as of 30 March, and we will be rolling out the next tranche of this in other regional settings and settings across the state from 30 June.