

MINISTER FOR POLICE

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [11.58 am] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be moved forthwith —

That this house —

- (1) notes that the Minister for Police misled the house on 23 September 2015 when she advised the house —

“I categorically and emphatically state to the house and the community of Western Australia that no member of the police union has raised the issue of detective shortages with me at any time, until I contacted them yesterday”;

and

- (2) calls on the Minister for Police to apologise for misleading the house, immediately correct the record and, in accordance with Westminster traditions, resign her commission as a minister in the WA Liberal government.

To call for the resignation of a minister is one of the most serious motions that can be moved. I understand that there is an indication from the Leader of the House that we can agree to this debate proceeding and to standing orders being suspended. So, I will sit down briefly.

Standing Orders Suspension — Amendment to Motion

MR J.H.D. DAY (Kalamunda — Leader of the House) [12 noon]: I note that this is the second time we are agreeing to the suspension of standing orders today. However, we will agree to 10 minutes each side, and that has been discussed. I move —

To insert after “forthwith” the following —

, subject to the debate being limited to 10 minutes for government members and 10 minutes for non-government members.

Amendment put and passed.

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion, as Amended

The SPEAKER: As this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need an absolute majority in order to proceed. If I hear a dissentient voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MRS M.H. ROBERTS (Midland) [12.01 pm]: I move —

That this house —

- (1) notes that the Minister for Police misled the house on 23 September 2015 when she advised the house —

“I categorically and emphatically state to the house and the community of Western Australia that no member of the police union has raised the issue of detective shortages with me at any time, until I contacted them yesterday”;

and

- (2) calls on the Minister for Police to apologise for misleading the house, immediately correct the record and, in accordance with Westminster traditions, resign her commission as a minister in the WA Liberal government.

The words that were uttered by the minister on 23 September followed questioning from me in this house. That was the answer that she provided in question time. We now know from evidence just provided by way of the report of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee this morning entitled “How do they manage? An investigation of the measures WA Police has in place to evaluate management of personnel” that there is evidence that the minister was made fully aware of detective shortages in May 2015, so months before. I have certainly heard anecdotal evidence from lots of members of the Western Australian Police Union. It has

Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr John Day; Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Bill Johnston

over 5 000 members in this state. Lots of them have told me that they raised this matter with the minister. The fact is that this minister thought that she could come into this house and mislead it.

We have seen from the committee report the evidence that was tendered by the Western Australian Police Union. We have heard from the member for Armadale the answers that were given from Mr Tilbury and Mr Shortland to the committee after questioning. We have also listened to the audio of that police union meeting, which is on the committee website. I understand that the minister is going to try to weasel out of this again. She will try to mislead the house yet again into believing that these matters were not raised with her. I understand that her weasel words are to the effect that this conversation was about tenure and not detective shortages. Let us look at the words. As reported, someone from the union says on the tape —

How are you going filling the extra 200 detectives positions? Have they brief you on that as part of ...

The minister responded —

Well they have told me they have actually started to take some detectives through, now I don't know ...

Someone from the union says —

It has commenced, I couldn't tell you what numbers ...

Then the minister says —

I can't tell you how many ... in actual fact when I wanted the extra 200 detectives as part of that commitment it was in response to regional WA, so I went around to all the regional centres.

Some of what she goes on to say is also pretty pertinent to this. She said —

One of the questions I always ask is what is on top of your wish list to try and make this station work effectively and usually it was a couple of extra detectives ...

As part of this conversation she admits that the issue of detective shortages has been raised with her throughout the length and breadth of this state, presumably by union members because the officers in these locations are members of the union. At the very end of this audio, she said —

... so, um, I will raise it and ask for an update of where we are up to with that and how we are going, where we are up to with applications and where we are up to with graduates. So I will ask the right questions.

The minister says that as a result of this conversation with the union, which has been recorded, she was going to find out about these detective shortages and vacancies.

In the conversation that is recorded for the union—I do not have time to go through it all now—the union raised with her the fact that not enough people are putting their hands up to become detectives and that WA Police cannot fill the detective schools. These are all matters that go to the detective shortage. There is a direct reference, with the union saying that officers prefer to remain in uniform rather than take up the detective positions. It is all about the detective shortage. The conversation is all about how these positions are hard to fill. The minister can try to weasel out of that if she likes but I think it is very clear to everyone that she misled the house.

Unfortunately, this minister has a track record on this. She often tries to give these cute answers when she does not give the whole truth. Sometimes ministers get incorrect information from their department, and that is an excuse under the Westminster system to say, “I was provided with the wrong information by my department.” But in this case, it is all about the minister; it is not about an answer provided to her by the police department. It is not about an answer provided to her by her office to read out in this place; it is all about her. She was asked directly whether these matters had been raised and she said that they had not. She spoke to journalists and she went on radio saying the same thing. When I raised the question in September, she said, “This is news to me. This is the first I have heard about it.” She said words to the effect, “If I had heard about it, I would have dealt with it.” The fact is that it had been raised with her for months. It was raised at the police union meeting, which the minister has now been found out on because we have the transcript of that meeting when it was directly raised and discussed with her.

Point of Order

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member opposite quoted from what she describes as a transcript. This is a serious motion. I think if she is going to quote from a transcript, she should at least have the courtesy of passing a copy of that over.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Midland can deal with it.

Debate Resumed

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is online, Premier; maybe you should learn to go online.

Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr John Day; Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Bill Johnston

This is a serious matter. The Premier has a minister in his government who has no credibility whatsoever. Why does she have no credibility? Because when she gives an answer in this place, she cannot be believed. When she gave that answer, dozens of police officers said to me, “We have raised it with the minister. She’s not telling the truth in the house.” I could not prove that but now we know —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Just let the member for Midland finish—she has three minutes left—and then members can respond.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The fact is that the evidence is now there. This matter of detective shortages was raised with her. Mr Tilbury said that he had been raising the issue until he was blue in the face, yet this minister put her head in the sand and dared to tell this Parliament that the first time it was raised with her was in September and she was going to get onto it. She told the union in May that she was going to get the briefing then. What did she do for all those months and why did she not tell the truth in this house? She has no integrity. She has no credibility. She cannot possibly continue as a minister of the Crown. If the minister will not resign, the Premier should sack her.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Police) [12.09 pm]: Mr Speaker —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, Premier.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr B.S. Wyatt interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Victoria Park.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen! I want to hear the minister.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would have thought that if those opposite are calling for my resignation over misleading the house, they would at least have given me the courtesy of their full argument before expecting me to stand. I am happy to stand —

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale!

Mr M. McGowan: You wouldn’t remember anyway.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Mr Speaker —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I stand by every single comment I made in September. My responses, those comments that I made to questions that were asked of me in this Parliament and when I spoke on radio and to *The West Australian*, were that the issue of detective vacancies—that is, full-time positions that are vacant—had not been raised with me by anybody in the WA Police Union until I found out about it on the day that I was asked here. I was informed by the police executive that as part of our growth program, additional positions had been created and there was a process of recruitment in train to backfill and to fill those additional positions. We started off with, I believe, around 890 positions and another 50 were added, and the police executive was in the process of training detectives to fill those positions. The conversation I had with the union board back in May 2015 was entirely different. That conversation was on our growth program.

From around the time I was appointed minister, I went right across the length and breadth of the state and asked all those individuals in stations what would be at the top of their wish list to improve the way they could do business, and they said, “More detectives.” I said, “Fantastic”, and I took it to the government. We went out with an election promise of 550 additional police and police auxiliary officers, which included the ability to train up an additional 200 detectives—an additional 200 detectives—to address the additional detectives that the officers in those regional stations said they needed to do their work effectively. They were not vacant positions; they did not exist. That is what I was talking about with shortages, because the regional officers were saying to me that they wanted more detectives. I recommend that people listen to the conversation that I had with the union board.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We have.

Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr John Day; Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Bill Johnston

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: You had your turn!

The issues that were raised with me were on behalf of some of the members of the union executive who, first of all, asked me, “Where are you up to with your election commitment of an additional 200 detectives?” I said words to the effect that I understood that it had started but that I could not tell them the number of detectives who had commenced the program but that I would get back to them, and I did. Another issue that was raised in that meeting was that there were issues with probationary detectives who might live in Joondalup but were stationed in Armadale. They were doing a lot of travelling. The level of supervision of those probationary detectives may also have been of concern. I was told that detectives might not want to take up positions if that issue of travel for the probationary detectives was not addressed. I raised that with the commissioner and I am given to understand that that issue has been resolved as a result. The other issue that was raised was that the workbook program that we required police officers to do in their own time prior to applying to detective school was a deterrent to officers taking up the training opportunities. That was because they had to do it in their own time. That system has now changed. Police officers who want to become detectives start detective training school with the workbook process as part of the training program. That is what I have been advised. They are completely different issues. They were not detective vacancies.

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, you were heard in absolute silence; I did not call a single member. Member for Cannington, listen to the minister.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The issue of vacancies had not been raised with me prior to me going out in the media and saying so in this Parliament; it had not. Mr Shortland went on radio and said that he had had a private conversation with me around the meeting with the union that I had had the day before about detective vacancies and I maintain to this day that that conversation did not occur. None of my staff in my office heard that conversation. I did not have a conversation with any member of the union about detective vacancies. I maintain that stance. We remain committed to our growth program. So I will not be resigning. I did not mislead Parliament. I did not give incorrect information. Yes, my version of events differs from that of the union, but any member of this house can now go to that transcript or can listen to the audio and hear that conversation. It was about training. It was about our growth program. It was not about filling detective vacancies—FTE positions that exist that we cannot get people to take up. It was not about that.

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [12.14 pm]: Every single day this government has another crisis.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I just want to tell you, Treasurer, that you are on two calls. I do not want the wall of noise.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Another day, another crisis for this government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Pilbara, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Back when this issue —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: When this issue was raised on 23 September 2015, detective shortages were a big issue. They continue to be a big issue, as does police —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Churchlands, I call you to order for the first time and the Premier for the first time.

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Butler for the first time. Thank you. Carry on.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I just want everyone to understand that when we raised in this house the important issue of detective shortages, the minister said —

... no member of the police union has raised the issue of detective shortages with me at any time ...

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That is what she said, as clear as day. I have with me a copy of the transcript of the recording of the meeting in May of last year, which is on the parliamentary website. The union asked the minister —

How are you going filling the extra 200 detectives positions?

The minister has said that detective shortages were not mentioned. The union is recorded as having raised in the meeting with her —

How are you going filling the extra 200 detectives positions?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Joondalup, number one is that you are in the wrong seat and number two is that I am calling you for shouting out. Thank you very much. We have got two minutes. We have had a reasonable debate. Let the Leader of the Opposition finish.

Mr M. McGOWAN: In this issue, this minister is guilty beyond reasonable doubt. She has misled the people of Western Australia, she has misled this Parliament and she has been caught out. She should apologise to the house and, in accordance with the traditions of Westminster Parliaments, she should resign. We know that this government has no belief in Westminster traditions. We saw that yesterday.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Churchlands, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Government members have no belief in the traditions of Westminster government, they do not believe in the concept of cabinet government and they do not believe in being honest to the Parliament. We have seen the police minister, of all people in this house, misleading the house and misleading the public about the number of detectives in the WA police force. This is an issue of fundamental accountability for the government and just follows on from every other issue that has come up over the course of this year and last year. This is a government in crisis, a government with ministers who are not accountable and a government that has been there too long.

Mr C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [12.18 pm]: If a member moves a motion in this Parliament that a member or a minister, in particular, has misled the Parliament, it is a serious matter and we would expect a case to be made in a serious and comprehensive way. The member for Midland quoted from the transcript of a recording, as I understand it, of a meeting of the WA Police Union board. There was no reference to who was making various comment. I do not know to this day who they were. Members opposite refuse to hand over to me a copy of it so that I can read it for myself.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: We have had a reasonable debate. If members want to have a rest, carry on the way you are going.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: From my memory of what the member for Midland read out, I did not hear the words “detective shortages”. I might be wrong but I did not hear the expression “detective shortages”.

Mr A. Krsticevic: It wasn't there.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It was not there. Her whole argument was about detective shortages but it was not mentioned in what was read out.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: He accuses me of being tricky. Who is being tricky? The opposition built its motion around detective shortages when that term does not, to the best of my knowledge, appear in what was read out. It is not there. This is a flimsy little attempt to try to score some political point. No doubt the members of the Western Australian Police Union were talking about a case for more detectives. That is very much different from saying there are vacancies with respect to detectives. They did not talk about vacancies or detective shortages; they made the case —

Mrs M.H. Roberts: They did.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: You didn't read it out!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Butler, I call you to order for the second time. Member for Midland, I seem to hear you in the mix here as well.

Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr John Day; Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Bill Johnston

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I understand they made the point about where were the extra detectives coming from. That would be an increase in the establishment of detectives. As the minister said, we are talking about an extra 200 detectives. What is the case? There is none.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Come on! I have seen some weak motions in this Parliament, but never one as weak as this when the opposition cannot even get the basic fact of its argument right. They are talking about their case —

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not know if you have a problem over there, member for Albany, but calm down.

The police union is making a case for more detectives. The Minister for Police is trying to deliver an extra 200 above the existing establishment. It is quite proper that they should discuss that. Were they talking about a shortage below establishment? Not from what I heard. They may have been concerned but they did not raise it. The opposition has made no case.

Mr J.R. Quigley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Butler, you are on two already.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This is a pathetic motion.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is your cheer squad: a little chuckle from the deep south! That is as good as it gets.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Albany!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Leader of the Opposition, you are smug. You have come in here and suspended standing orders three times and called for two ministers to resign. I tell you what a lie is in politics, Mr Speaker: a lie in politics is when you go out and deliberately tell something that is not true.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the second time. Member for Albany!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If you go out and say something that you know not to be true, that is a lie in politics. There are examples of people lying in politics. If members want me to go through them, I am happy to do so. This motion was based on innuendo and supposition, and it is weak.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Are you going to ask the Premier to withdraw his allegation of lying?

The SPEAKER: I did not hear anything that happened in the melee that happened when people were crossing. Let us get on with the business.

Division Resumed

Ayes (19)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr P.B. Watson
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr F.M. Logan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Ms J. Farrer	Mr M. McGowan	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms R. Saffioti	

Noes (34)

Mr P. Abetz	Ms W.M. Duncan	Dr G.G. Jacobs	Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr F.A. Alban	Ms E. Evangel	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr J. Norberger
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mr J.M. Francis	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr I.C. Blayney	Mrs G.J. Godfrey	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr I.M. Britza	Mr B.J. Grylls	Ms L. Mettam	Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Dr K.D. Hames	Mr P.T. Miles	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr V.A. Catania	Mrs L.M. Harvey	Ms A.R. Mitchell	Mr A. Krsticevic (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr C.D. Hatton	Mr N.W. Morton	
Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr A.P. Jacob	Dr M.D. Nahan	

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Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr John Day; Mr Colin Barnett; Speaker; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Bill Johnston

Pairs

Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms S.F. McGurk

Mr R.S. Love
Mr M.J. Cowper

Question put and negatived.