

WA POLICE — COURT ACCOUTREMENTS

797. Mrs M.H. ROBERTS to the Minister for Police:

On behalf of my colleague the member for Girrawheen, I welcome the students of Ashdale Secondary College to our Parliament today.

Yesterday the minister advised the house in question time that —

... if the union raises an issue with me, I get to work on resolving the problem.

- (1) Did the Western Australian Police Union not write to the minister on 21 January regarding the issue of wearing accoutrements in courts, asking for urgent action and suggesting that the minister raise the matter with the Attorney General?
- (2) When did the minister first raise the matter with the Attorney General?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I appreciate this question from the member for Midland.

- (1)–(2) Yes, that is correct, the union did write to me in January and we discussed at our meeting very early in the year the issue of police officers wanting to wear their accoutrements in court. I had a discussion with the Attorney General on this issue, and the Attorney General advised me that he cannot direct the magistrates and the judges as to how they run their courtrooms.

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I asked the minister specifically when she first raised the matter with the Attorney General. That is the answer I am seeking.

The SPEAKER: Member for Midland, that is not a point of order. Just let the minister answer. I want a succinct answer, minister.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Mr Speaker, I will attempt to give a succinct answer. I do note that yesterday my answer to the question from the member for Midland was 558 words, which I can usually get out in a three-minute ministerial statement. It did take considerably longer because of the rabble over there objecting throughout my answer to the question.

The SPEAKER: Right. Just let me tell you something now: you have just wasted another minute telling me about 558 words.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The SPEAKER: I do not want to hear from you, thank you, member for Albany. Just answer the question, please.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Going back to what I was saying, I had a conversation with the Attorney General on receipt of the letter, and he advised me that he cannot direct the courts and the judiciary as to how they run their courts. He suggested that the police union speak to the Chief Justice and the Chief Magistrate to discuss the matter and to try to arrive at a satisfactory outcome. As it happened, around that time I had a meeting scheduled already with Chief Justice Wayne Martin. I raised the issue with him in a discussion and he said he was prepared to sit down with police and discuss the issue, and try to arrive at a satisfactory outcome about police wearing accoutrements in court. The police have requested that the courts allow them to wear accoutrements because of the heightened threat level that they are currently operating under, and have been since September 2014. So there is a process in train. The police officers are in discussions with the heads of the courts, the heads of jurisdictions, and there is a commitment I believe on both sides to try to arrive at a satisfactory outcome to resolve the issue of the police officers wanting to maintain their response to the heightened threat alert that they are operating under while still respecting the jurisdiction of the courts.