

OUT-OF-CONTROL PARTIES

Statement by Minister for Police

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Police) [2.08 pm]: Last Saturday night Perth experienced one of the worst examples of an out-of-control gathering to date. This party, which I have been advised was advertised on social media, attracted 500 people—mostly juveniles. We saw graphic television footage of partygoers creating disturbance and destruction within the local community and pelting police officers who had responded to the disturbance with bricks, bottles and other items. A St John Ambulance responding to a stabbing victim had its side window smashed.

The incident required a massive police response, including 40 police vehicles, 70 police officers, mounted police, a police dog and, a police helicopter, all of which were vital police resources that were required to be diverted from other parts of the metropolitan area. Seven people were arrested and charged, with further arrests and charges anticipated following completion of police investigations.

I am appalled by the irresponsible behaviour of the partygoers, and that is why the Liberal–National government is introducing legislative and practical measures to give police the tools to tackle these out-of-control parties. These measures are being developed in consultation with police and include legislation to make it easier for police to shut down out-of-control gatherings, and resources to assist police to deal with these situations. The legislation will create an offence of an out-of-control gathering under which hosts are liable for a nuisance party unless they take reasonable steps to avoid the party becoming out of control—a penalty of 12 months' imprisonment and a \$12 000 fine will apply, new powers for police to enter premises and shut down out-of-control gatherings, new powers for police to disperse troublemakers, and the power to recover costs associated with police attending such an incident.

Resources to support police tackling this type of incident will include an additional \$1.2 million to increase the number of general purpose dogs by nine. The police will also obtain and convert two 14-person prison buses to support the arrest and processing of large numbers of irresponsible people who are breaking the law at these out-of-control gatherings. These measures will send a strong message to party hosts and partygoers that the community does not condone this type of irresponsible and outrageous behaviour. The measures will also encourage more sensible behaviour by party hosts to ensure that they take the necessary steps to prevent their parties getting out of control and creating this type of nuisance to their local community. These measures are not aimed at parties or gatherings that are responsibly organised, are a bit loud or have large numbers of people attending; they are aimed at those parties or gatherings that are arranged and conducted without any regard for the local community and get out of control.

Some criticism has been levelled at the government by the opposition that this legislation is taking too long to bring to the Parliament. My response to such criticism is that this legislation is a high priority for the government, but we need to get it right because it will involve juveniles, and we do not want the legislation to have unintended consequences for the many social gatherings that are a part of our social fabric. This legislation will be introduced into the house next week, and I call upon the opposition to give it its full support and assist with its timely passage.